

In the hectic final weeks of the campaign and during the presidential transition, several of Mr. Trump's advisers drew Mr. Nader close. He met often with Mr. Kushner, Mr. Flynn and Stephen K. Bannon, who took over as campaign chairman after Mr. Manafort resigned amid revelations about his work in Ukraine.

In December 2016, Mr. Nader turned again to an internet company linked to Mr. Zamel — WhiteKnight, based in the Philippines — to purchase a presentation demonstrating the impact of social media campaigns on Mr. Trump's electoral victory. Asked about the purchase, a representative of WhiteKnight said: "WhiteKnight delivers premium research and high-end business development services for prestigious clients around the world. WhiteKnight does not talk about any of its clients."

After the inauguration, both Mr. Zamel and Mr. Nader visited the White House, meeting with Mr. Kushner and Mr. Bannon.

At that time, Mr. Nader was promoting a plan to use private contractors to carry out economic sabotage against Iran that, he hoped, might coerce it to permanently abandon its nuclear program. The plan included efforts to deter Western companies from investing in Iran, and operations to sow mistrust among Iranian officials. He advocated the project, which he estimated would cost about \$300 million, to American, Emirati and Saudi officials.

Last spring, Mr. Nader traveled to Riyadh for meetings with senior Saudi military and intelligence officials to pitch his Iran sabotage plan. He was convinced, according to several people familiar with his plan, that economic warfare was the key to the overthrow of the government in Tehran. One person briefed on Mr. Nader's activities said he tried to persuade Mr. Kushner to endorse the plan to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on a trip to Riyadh, although it was unclear whether the message was delivered.

Asked about Mr. Nader's plans to attack Iran, the senior Saudi official said Mr. Nader had a habit of pitching proposals that went nowhere.

Mr. Nader was also in discussions with Mr. Prince, the former head of Blackwater, about a plan to get the Saudis to pay \$2 billion to set up a private army to combat Iranian proxy forces in Yemen.

Since entering the White House, Mr. Trump has allied himself closely with Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. His first overseas trip was to Riyadh. He strongly backed Saudi and Emirati efforts to isolate their neighbor Qatar, another American ally, even over apparent disagreement from the State and Defense Departments.

This month, Mr. Trump also withdrew from an Obama administration nuclear deal with Iran that both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had campaigned against for years, delivering them their biggest victory yet from his administration.

Trump Slams NY Times Report About Another Trump Jr. Meeting

By Mark Moore

New York Post, May 20, 2018

President Trump in a series of tweets on Sunday blasted a report in the "Failing and Crooked" New York Times on his son Donald Trump Jr. meeting three months before the election with an emissary from two Arab princes offering the campaign help and called for the special counsel's Russia probe to "STOP!"

"Things are really getting ridiculous. The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!" the president tweeted.

The newspaper reported on Saturday that Trump's oldest son met at the Trump Tower in August 2016 with George Nader, a Lebanese-American businessman, who said he was representing the crown princes of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and that they wanted to help his father win the election.

Joel Zamel, an Israeli political strategist, also attended the meeting and talked about how his company could benefit the campaign.

The sitdown was arranged by Erik Prince, a private military contractor and brother of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

A lawyer for Donald Jr. told the newspaper the meeting was about a marketing pitch that his client rejected.

Trump's son and campaign officials — including Jared Kushner and former campaign chairman Paul Manafort — met with a Kremlin-connected lawyer offering dirt on Hillary Clinton at the Trump Tower in June 2016.

In another Tweet, the president continued to lash out at special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the election and any collusion on the part of Trump's campaign associates, calling it a "Witch Hunt."

"At what point does this soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt, composed of 13 Angry and Heavily Conflicted Democrats and two people who have worked for Obama for 8 years, STOP!," Trump wrote on his Twitter account.

"They have found no Collusion with Russia, No Obstruction, but they aren't looking at the corruption in the Hillary Clinton Campaign where she deleted 33,000 Emails, got \$145,000,000 while Secretary of State, paid McCabes wife \$700,000 (and got off the FBI hook along with Terry M) and so much more," he continued to rail on the social messaging site, misspelling collusion.

Republicans and real Americans should start getting tough on this Scam," he concluded.

Mueller, a Republican, was appointed to head the FBI by President George W. Bush in 2001, and was named as special counsel in May 2017 by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, a Trump appointee.

'World's Most Expensive Witch Hunt': Trump Lashes Out At NYT, Democrats

By David Nakamura

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

President Trump lashed out Sunday at "the World's most expensive Witch Hunt," trashing a new report in the New York Times that said an emissary representing the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates offered help to Trump's 2016 campaign.

In a six-part morning tweetstorm, Trump accused the special counsel's investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 election of turning to other leads around the world after, in his words, finding no collusion or obstruction of justice in its ongoing probe.

Things are really getting ridiculous. The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 20, 2018

The president was reacting to a lengthy story in the Times that said George Nader, purportedly representing the two Persian Gulf states, met with Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, at Trump Tower in August 2016. The meeting was arranged by Erik Prince, the former head of Blackwater, a private security firm that has since changed its name.

The paper reported that Nader told Trump Jr. that Saudi and UAE princes were interested in helping his father win the election, and that an Israeli social media expert who also attended the meeting suggested ways to help manipulate public opinion. In the United States, it is illegal for campaigns to accept financial contributions from or coordinate with foreign governments in federal elections.

According to the newspaper, Trump Jr. reacted approvingly to the offer, though it is unclear whether any plan was put into action by the campaign. The Times reported that Nader is cooperating with the special counsel investigation, led by Robert S. Mueller III.

In his tweets, Trump asserted, without evidence, that investigations into his campaign's connections with Russia have cost taxpayers \$20 million and suggested that it is a politically motivated effort to undermine his presidency. The president said Democrats were in charge of the probe, even though Mueller, a Republican, was appointed head of the FBI by President George W. Bush, a Republican, in 2001.

...At what point does this soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt, composed of 13 Angry and Heavily Conflicted Democrats and two people who have worked for Obama for 8 years, STOP! They have found no Collusion with Russia, No Obstruction, but they aren't looking at the corruption...— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 20, 2018

As he has in the past, Trump attempted to direct attention and blame onto Democrats, including Hillary Clinton's campaign, raising old questions about emails she sent on a private server during her tenure as secretary of state in Barack Obama's administration.

Trump On N.Y. Times: 'Things Are Really Getting Ridiculous'

By Brent D. Griffiths

Politico, May 20, 2018

President Donald Trump on Sunday slammed a New York Times report that his son and other campaign aides sought to curry favor with other foreign countries along with Russia during the 2016 campaign.

"Things are really getting ridiculous," the president wrote on Twitter. "The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!"

Trump appeared to be responding to a Times report from Saturday night that says Donald Trump Jr. and former Blackwater head Erik Prince attended a meeting in Trump Tower in August 2016 with an Israeli social media specialist and a representatives of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the Times, the meeting was seen as an opportunity for the two countries to build ties to Trump and his team. The social media specialist also pitched a plan on how to manipulate those platforms to Trump's benefit.

The information in the report could also call into question Prince's testimony to the House Intelligence Committee last November, when he testified that he played a very limited role in the Trump campaign.

On Sunday, the president sought to use the fact that the report focuses largely on ties outside of Russia as evidence that his critics have found "no collusion" and "no obstruction." This past week marked the one-year anniversary of special counsel Robert Mueller taking the reins of the Russia probe, which has led to five guilty pleas and 17 indictments, including charges against Russian nationals and companies for participating in what has been called "information warfare" to sway the 2016 race.

"Now that the Witch Hunt has given up on Russia and is looking at the rest of the World, they should easily be able to take it into the Mid-Term Elections where they can put some

hurt on the Republican Party," the president added. "Don't worry about Dems FISA Abuse, missing Emails or Fraudulent Dossier!"

POLITICO reported Thursday that Trump's newest attorney, former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, has begun planning for prep sessions with the president if the commander in chief agrees to sit down with Mueller.

Intelligence Committee Democrats: Trump Jr.'s Reported Meeting With Arab Representative Could Be Crime

By Deirdre Shesgreen

USA Today, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — The top Democrats on the Senate and House intelligence committees said Sunday Trump campaign officials may have committed a crime if a new report proves true: that three months before the 2016 election, President Trump's son met an emissary for two Arab princes and an Israeli political operative who offered to help his father win the presidential election.

On Saturday, the New York Times reported that Donald Trump Jr. met on Aug. 3, 2016 with a representative for two wealthy princes, from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, along with Joel Zamel, an Israeli expert in "social media manipulation."

The men reportedly told Trump Jr. that they wanted to support the Trump campaign. Zamel even said his firm "had already drawn up a multimillion-dollar proposal for a social media manipulation effort to help elect Mr. Trump," according to the New York Times story.

"If these facts are accurate, it demonstrates yet again just how not only willing but eager the president's son and the Trump campaign were to solicit, to receive foreign help" during the election, Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif, said on NBC's Meet the Press. Schiff is the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee.

"Receiving, soliciting, using foreign assistance is a crime," Schiff said. "You're not allowed to get the help of a foreign government, friendly or unfriendly," in American elections.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said if the New York Times story is true, it's yet another indication that a foreign nation was trying to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

"I don't understand what the president doesn't get about the law that says if you have a foreign nation interfere in an American election, that's illegal," Warner said Sunday on CNN's State of the Nation.

Warner said that Trump Jr.'s reported meeting with the three Middle Eastern officials is similar to his sit-down with Russian agents to discuss what he thought would be incriminating information on Hillary Clinton in June 2016.

Trump Jr. took that meeting with Russian attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya and Rinat Akhmetshin, a Russian lobbyist, among others, because he thought they had damaging information about Clinton.

Both meetings are reportedly being investigated by Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller, who was appointed to probe Russian meddling in the 2016 campaign and possible collusion between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign.

The New York Times story and Mueller's investigation was clearly on the president's mind on Sunday morning as well. In a series of tweets, Trump blasted the probe as an "expensive Witch Hunt" that has not turned up any evidence against him.

"Things are really getting ridiculous," Trump said in one tweet. "The Failing and Crooked (but not as Crooked as Hillary Clinton) @nytimes has done a long & boring story indicating that the World's most expensive Witch Hunt has found nothing on Russia & me so now they are looking at the rest of the World!"

"....At what point does this soon to be \$20,000,000 Witch Hunt, composed of 13 Angry and Heavily Conflicted Democrats and two people who have worked for Obama for 8 years, STOP!" Trump wrote in a second missive. "They have found no Collusion with Russia, No Obstruction, but they aren't looking at the corruption..." in the Clinton campaign.

CNN's Jake Tapper Presses Democrat For Evidence Trump Campaign Colluded With Russia

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

CNN's Jake Tapper pressed Sen. Mark Warner for evidence that the Trump campaign accepted help from a foreign adversary to win the 2016 presidential race.

Mr. Warner, vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, cited a report released by the committee last week that found Russia "massively interfered in our elections," not only "to sow disarray, but to help Trump and to hurt Clinton."

But Mr. Tapper said the big question is still whether Russia did so "with the assistance or participation of any American, especially and including people who are in the Trump campaign's orbit."

"That is clearly the endpoint question that we're going to have to deal with," the Virginia Democrat responded.

"But have you seen any evidence of that?" Mr. Tapper shot back.

Mr. Warner pointed to the Trump Tower meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer who was offering dirt on Hillary Clinton. He said the meeting shows the Trump campaign was "receptive to these kinds of offers" and may be indicative of a "pattern."

"Now, did the president know about that meeting or not? I don't know," Mr. Warner said. "I'd like to get the answer to that."

"Still, as far as the public knows," Mr. Tapper said, "no evidence of anybody in the Trump team accepting the offers of help, no evidence of actual conspiracy that we know of yet, that we in the public know of yet. And you're not willing to comment on whether or not you've seen evidence of that conspiracy."

Alan Dershowitz: Mueller Probe, FBI Full Of 'Republicans Who Hated Trump'

By Justin Caruso

Daily Caller, May 20, 2018

Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz said that Robert Mueller's legal team and the FBI are full of "long-term Republicans who hated Trump" on ABC's "This Week" Sunday.

Mediaite founder Dan Abrams said, "Alan's been consistent on the issue about the law over the years. And I respect that. But the notion that the special counsel can't view this objectively, that Robert Mueller is somehow, what, Robert Mueller is so compromised? Which way? A long-time Republican? Why can't Robert Mueller be the one to assess whether there are any crimes here?"

"First of all, this long-term Republican-Comey was a long-term Republican. They're all long-term Republicans who hated Trump," Dershowitz said. (RELATED: 'If This Had Been Hillary Clinton's Lawyer...' — Alan Dershowitz Brings The Truth On CNN)

Abrams shot back, "You know that Mueller hated Trump?"

"You won't have any doubt about that at the end," Dershowitz said. (RELATED: WATCH: Tucker And Alan Dershowitz Ruin James Comey's Night)

Alan Dershowitz: Word Of An FBI Informant In The Trump Campaign Merits Investigation

By Naomi Lim

Washington Examiner, May 20, 2018

Famed lawyer Alan Dershowitz said Sunday reports the FBI had a source giving them information about the Trump campaign is grounds for a investigation.

"Now we have information of an FBI informant in the campaign. That's worth investigation," Dershowitz said during a panel on ABC's "This Week."

"That's good enough to get an investigation going," he continued when told the supposed FBI informant was not a member of Trump's campaign, but that they spoke with up to three campaign aides ahead of the 2016 election.

Two reports published Friday evening, one by the New York Times and the other by the Washington Post, described

an FBI source, an American academic teaching in the United Kingdom, who met with up to three members of the Trump campaign ahead of the 2016 election.

The identity of the FBI informant was leaked to at least two media outlets, but the newsrooms refrained from publishing the individual's name out of concern for national security and the safety of the person and his or her sources. Subsequent reporting has inferred the informant was a Cambridge University professor, who was not embedded in the campaign but sought out meetings with campaign advisers Carter Page and George Papadopoulos, and with Trump campaign co-chair Sam Clovis.

The reports follow Republican furor this week about a possible effort to spy on Trump's 2016 campaign.

Dershowitz, a critic of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe, also condemned political pundits who argue Mueller and former FBI Director James Comey are not biased against President Trump because they had been members of the Republican Party.

"This 'long-time Republican.' Comey was a long-time Republican. They're all long-time Republicans who is hated Trump," he added.

Michael Cohen Payments Put Spotlight On New York Investment Firm Linked To Russian Billionaire

By Rosalind S. Helderman, Michael Kranish And Steven Mufson

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

In June 2017, Michael Cohen, President Trump's longtime personal attorney, had an invitation for one of his other clients: Would he like to attend a fundraiser for Trump's reelection?

Andrew Intrater — the chief executive of Columbus Nova, a New York-based investment management firm linked to a Russian billionaire — paid the \$35,000 donation to attend the event, which also benefited the Republican National Committee.

The contribution was one of several ways that Columbus Nova and people associated with it lent support for Trump and his allies last year. It underscores how Cohen, who was seeking to raise money for the RNC as a deputy finance chairman, sought to use his new standing after Trump's election to bolster both his finances and political clout.

Intrater also made a \$250,000 donation to Trump's inaugural committee, a contribution that gave him prime access to the January 2017 festivities. He brought with him as a guest his cousin, Russian billionaire Viktor Vekselberg, whose conglomerate Renova Group is the biggest client of Columbus Nova.

And Columbus Nova paid Cohen \$500,000 in the first half of 2017 to bring in new investors. It was among the corporations that paid Cohen at least \$2.95 million in consulting fees after Trump took office.

Both Columbus Nova officials and a spokesman for Vekselberg have said that Vekselberg played no role in the hiring of Cohen.

But the Trump lawyer's connection to Columbus Nova has put new scrutiny on the Russian investor, who made billions in the post-Soviet area in oil and gas industry. Vekselberg and Renova Group were sanctioned in April by the Treasury Department — an inclusion that surprised both his colleagues and some U.S. Russia experts, who said that he is not viewed as close to Russian President Vladimir Putin as others on the list.

Meanwhile, federal officials working with special counsel Robert S. Mueller III questioned Vekselberg when his plane landed at a New York-area airport earlier this year and have also interviewed Intrater, the New York Times has reported.

The exact nature of Mueller's interest in Vekselberg is unclear. As part of his investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 campaign, the special counsel has been examining whether foreign money flowed into U.S. political campaigns, according to people familiar with the probe.

A spokesman for Vekselberg did not respond to requests for comment about the special counsel investigation. Columbus Nova officials declined to comment on the report that Intrater has spoken with Mueller's team.

Intrater declined to comment. A lawyer for Cohen did not respond to a request for comment.

Intrater and Cohen met by happenstance, according to a person familiar with their relationship. Intrater was having dinner at a Manhattan restaurant in the fall of 2016 with some friends when one of them pointed out that Cohen was also dining there. The friend introduced Cohen to Intrater, and the two stayed in touch.

After the election, Intrater, a Trump supporter, donated \$250,000 to the inaugural committee so he could participate in the festivities in Washington, according to a person familiar with his decision.

Intrater gave Vekselberg an extra ticket. At one point during their time in Washington, the two cousins encountered Cohen, the person said.

Around the same time, Intrater signed Cohen to a \$1 million annual contract to help find investors for Columbus Nova.

"Andy was impressed with the large number of wealthy people Cohen seemed to know," said the person familiar with Intrater's decision who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters. "Michael Cohen indicated he could recruit investors for him."

In late June 2017, Intrater — who had previously donated only \$4,000 to federal candidates, according to campaign finance records — contributed \$35,000 to Trump Victory, a joint fundraising committee for Trump's reelection and the RNC.

But not long after, the business relationship between Intrater and Cohen ended.

Cohen had failed to identify any new investors for Columbus Nova. The company and Cohen agreed to terminate the contract and Cohen was paid only half of the \$1 million their agreement had originally called for, according to a person familiar with the arrangement.

Columbus Nova was launched as an investment management firm in 2000 by Intrater, with a commitment from Vekselberg to invest in its projects on a case-by-case basis, officials said.

The firm has declined to say how much of Vekselberg's money it invests but confirmed that his conglomerate is its largest client. Among his investments was the media company Gawker, in which an investment fund managed by Columbus Nova invested \$15 million in January 2016 on Vekselberg's behalf, according to people familiar with the transaction.

Ilya Zaslavskiy, a former Russian energy consultant who now runs Underminers.info, a project studying post-Soviet oligarchs, said such investments, as well as philanthropic donations, are used by wealthy Russians to promote the Kremlin's interests abroad.

"It's about reputation for himself and his family and trying to establish the good life for his family here. And also about advancing the Kremlin's goal of soft power," said Zaslavskiy, who worked in the Russian energy industry until 2010, including for a period of time for a company controlled by Vekselberg.

The notion was rejected by a close colleague of Vekselberg's, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe his thinking.

"He has global interests," the colleague said. "He does not do this to become part of high society. Someone worth \$14 billion is part of global society already."

Over the years, Columbus Nova has been described as closely associated with Vekselberg. A 2018 SEC filing by a company whose directors included a Columbus Nova partner described the firm as "the U.S.-based investment and operating arm of Mr. Vekselberg's Renova Group of companies."

The website of Vekselberg's company, Renova Group, listed Columbus Nova as one of its companies in 2017, according to pages that have since been archived. The website was recently pulled down, replaced by a message that it was under construction.

However, Columbus Nova has said it is owned by Americans and has never been controlled by the Renova Group or Vekselberg.

Interviews with people who have worked with Columbus Nova have said they perceived the firm's relationship with Vekselberg to be a close one, regardless of the company's ownership structure.

"It was obvious that when you entered Columbus Nova's office you were entering Viktor Vekselberg's New York office," said an American businessman who visited the firm several times six or seven years ago and spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private interactions.

"The conversations there were primarily about placing Vekselberg's money, though they were also seeking other money for investment," he added.

Vekselberg started building his corporate empire in the Yeltsin years, after the fall of the Soviet Union. He founded Renova Asset Management Co. in 1990 and made money selling used copper cables and in the aluminum business.

He had huge success with his investments in the oil and gas industry. Vekselberg and a handful of Russian partners — Alfa, Access and Renova — initially bought 40 percent of a state-owned oil firm for just \$810 million during the post-Soviet privatization wave. Later, after they had acquired the entire company, BP paid them \$7.8 billion for half the enterprise.

The company then became TNK-BP, a lucrative joint venture that threw off massive dividends. Renova's share came to \$4.5 billion by 2008 — equal to \$75 million a month at that time. After the marriage of the Russian partners and BP turned rancorous, Rosneft paid \$55 billion to acquire all of TNK-BP in 2013; Renova's share amounted to roughly \$7 billion.

Among Vekselberg's main assets now are two Swiss-based firms: Sulzer, a maker of pumps, and Oerlikon, a maker of high-tech products and components.

In April, Vekselberg was one of seven Russian business executives who was sanctioned by the U.S. government after the poisoning of a former Russian spy in the U.K. that Western intelligence officials have blamed on Russia.

"Russian oligarchs and elites who profit from this corrupt system will no longer be insulated from the consequences of their government's destabilizing activities," the Treasury Department said in a statement at the time.

The move surprised Vekselberg.

"He is not part of Putin's inner circle. That's why when he was sanctioned he was shocked," said Vekselberg's colleague, who has spoken to him recently.

Some Russia experts in the United States were also taken aback by Vekselberg's inclusion on the list, noting that he has demonstrated an interest in building ties between the United States and Russia.

"I was shocked when I saw his name there," said Michael McFaul, who served as U.S. ambassador to Moscow under President Barack Obama. "I think generally sanctions are the right thing to do. But I know lots of people who work with him. He would not make my top 10, top 20 or top 30."

The Treasury Department declined to comment.

Associates of Vekselberg's in Russia said he is probably displeased by the new wave of attention triggered by the news about Columbus Nova's relationship with Cohen.

"Vekselberg is not very public; he does not like to be on TV, or give interviews, or speeches at events," said Sergey Aleksashenko, a former deputy finance minister and former deputy chairman of Russia's Central Bank. "Like all Russian oligarchs, he needs to keep good relations with Putin and the government. He's not crazy — he is very cautious."

Alice Crites and Tom Hamburger in Washington and Amie Ferris-Rotman in Moscow contributed to this report.

Investigators Finally Get Look At Materials From Cohen Raid

By Larry Neumeister

Associated Press, May 20, 2018

NEW YORK (AP) — Criminal investigators are getting their first look at materials gathered from raids on the home and office of President Donald Trump's personal lawyer as a process to separate items subject to attorney-client privilege appears to be meeting a judge's demand that it occur speedily and efficiently.

The progress comes just days before U.S. District Judge Kimba M. Wood will preside over a fourth hearing resulting from Michael Cohen's efforts to gain influence over what potential evidence seized in the April 9 raids can be deemed subject to the privilege and blocked from the view of criminal prosecutors. Prosecutors say they are investigating possible fraud as they study Cohen's personal business dealings.

Wood last month designated a former federal judge, Barbara Jones, to serve as a neutral party — known as a special master — and resolve disputes over what items can be kept secret and out of the view of investigators.

Twice, Jones has filed letters updating the status of the privilege search, most recently a week ago. She said she will provide Wood with a timeline for concluding the privilege review once she has received enough of Cohen's electronic property.

In a letter to the court on Friday, Cohen's lawyers indicated they were encouraged by the system that was set up, noting the "careful review procedure that is currently being overseen by the special master." The letter was filed as they sought to exclude Michael Avenatti, an attorney for porn star Stormy Daniels, from joining the court case.

The first materials to face the scrutiny of Jones and lawyers for Cohen, Trump and the Trump Organization, were likely the easiest to study: eight boxes of paper documents.

The majority of what was seized, though, was contained on over a dozen electronic devices, including computers, cellular phones and an iPad. The paper documents, numbering in the hundreds or thousands, were processed over a two-week period, enabling criminal prosecutors in recent days to begin scrutinizing raid materials for the first time.

But it is likely that the electronic documents, containing a much larger volume of materials, will take longer to process.

Jones said in a letter to the court a week ago that the government was expected to produce all of the content from the raids except for the electronic contents of a single computer by Friday. Then, lawyers for Cohen and Trump will designate items they think are subject to attorney-client privilege as the same time Jones is making her own designations.

At hearings last month, Wood said she wanted the process to move much faster than the more than a year that it took lawyers to resolve privilege disputes after a civil rights attorney was arrested in a terrorism probe in 2002.

Joanna Hendon, a lawyer for Trump, said last month that even the president was ready to "make himself available, as needed" to aid the attorney-client privilege search.

Lawyers for Cohen had pledged that they were ready to work around around-the-clock, if necessary, to ensure there was no delay.

Last month, Cohen's lawyers revealed that his three clients in 2017 and 2018 were Trump, Elliott Broidy — a Trump fundraiser who paid \$1.6 million to a Playboy Playmate with whom he had an extramarital affair — and Fox News host Sean Hannity.

In court papers, prosecutors have said the searches "are the result of a months-long investigation into Cohen, and seek evidence of crimes, many of which have nothing to do with his work as an attorney, but rather relate to Cohen's own business dealings."

The raids were authorized by a federal magistrate judge based on factual information presented by federal prosecutors in New York. They were triggered in part by a referral from special counsel Robert Mueller, who separately is looking into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

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Roger Stone 'Prepared' To Be Indicted In Mueller's Probe

By Marisa Schultz
New York Post, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — Roger Stone, a former political adviser to President Trump, said Sunday he's "prepared" for an indictment from special counsel Robert Mueller as the Russia probe is closing in his associates.

"It is not inconceivable now that Mr. Mueller and his team may seek to conjure up some extraneous crime, pertaining to my business, or maybe not even pertaining to the 2016 election. I would chock this up to an effort to silence me," Stone told NBC's "Meet the Press."

"So I am prepared, should that be the case."

Stone, a longtime ally of Trump's, said neither he nor his lawyer has been contacted by Mueller. But Stone said at least eight of his current or former associates have been "terrorized by Mr. Mueller's investigation."

"I can guarantee you they have found no evidence whatsoever of Russian collusion, nor trafficking of allegedly hacked emails with WikiLeaks," Stone said.

Stone's relationship with WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, has been under the microscope. WikiLeaks published thousands of hacked documents stolen from the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman John Podesta before the 2016 presidential election.

Before WikiLeaks published the damaging emails, Stone tweeted that Clinton's campaign would soon be over with the help of WikiLeaks.

"Julian Assange will deliver a devastating expose on Hillary at a time of his choosing. I stand by my prediction," Stone tweeted Oct. 6, 2016, a day before Podesta's emails were released.

Stone downplays his connection with Assange and said he received nothing from WikiLeaks or the Russians.

"I had no advance notice of the content, source, or the exact disclosure time of the WikiLeaks disclosures," Stone said. "It is a wild goose chase."

But the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee said Stone's statements in public and to the committee are inconsistent.

"Roger Stone is known for a lot of things," said Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) "Candor isn't really one of them. And either his testimony before our committee was untrue, or his public statements are untrue. Both cannot be fact because they're inconsistent with each other."

RNC Paid Nearly Half A Million Dollars To Law Firm Representing Hope Hicks And Others In Russia Probes

By Michelle Ye Hee Lee And Anu Narayanswamy
Washington Post, May 20, 2018

The Republican National Committee paid nearly half a million dollars to a law firm that represents former White House communications director Hope Hicks and others in the Russia investigations, according to a new federal filing.

The RNC's \$451,780 payment to Trout Cacheris & Janis adds to the mounting legal fees associated with the investigations by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III and several congressional committees of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign.

Hicks hired Robert Trout, founder of the law firm, as her personal attorney in September, according to news reports. The report of the payments for legal and compliance services, contained in the Federal Election Commission report filed Sunday, is the first public disclosure of RNC payments to the law firm since Hicks hired Trout.

Three lawyers at the firm represent people in addition to Hicks in the investigations by Mueller and the House and Senate intelligence committees, according to the firm's website. Hicks, who was one of President Trump's most trusted and loyal aides, was interviewed by Mueller and the House and Senate intelligence panels in early 2018.

Hicks resigned from her White House position in February, and her last day was in March.

Last year, the RNC began tapping a pool of money stockpiled for election recounts and other legal matters to pay the ballooning legal fees of Trump and his associates drawn into the Russia investigations.

Some party officials thought it would be more appropriate to create a separate legal defense fund for the case, *The Washington Post* reported last year. But RNC officials concluded that it is permissible for the party to pay for the president's legal fees. At the time, party and administration officials were working to determine whether executive branch staff members, who must comply with gift rules, could have their legal fees defrayed by the RNC or private legal defense funds.

A legal defense fund was created in February to help defray the costs faced by Trump's aides who are drawn into the Russia investigations. But it is unclear whether the fund has received or paid any money, as it has not publicly disclosed any information about donations or spending.

A spokesperson for the RNC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The RNC continued to post strong fundraising figures in April, raising \$12.7 million, for a total of \$173.9 million in the 2018 cycle and \$43.8 million in cash on hand, the filing shows.

The Democratic National Committee raised \$7.8 million in April, for a total of \$92.2 million for the 2018 cycle. The DNC had \$8.7 million in cash on hand and \$5.3 million in debt.

But the main outside groups supporting Democratic congressional candidates outraised their GOP counterparts in

April. The two Democratic super PACs supporting congressional candidates in the midterm elections raised a total of \$11.2 million, compared with \$6 million by the two main Republican super PACs, according to reports filed Sunday and earlier this month.

Among the six-figure donors to the Senate Majority PAC, which supports Senate Democrats, were actor and producer Seth MacFarlane, who gave \$2 million; Cynthia Simon-Skjodt, a philanthropist and daughter of the Simon Property Group founder, who gave \$1 million; and Bay Area real estate developer George Marcus, who gave \$1 million.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin Says Trade War Is 'On Hold' After Progress In U.S.-China Talks

By Deirdre Shesgreen

USA Today, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump's treasury secretary said Sunday the U.S. will not impose \$150 billion in threatened tariffs on China while the two countries negotiate a deal to reduce America's trade deficit with its economic rival.

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Fox News Sunday. "We have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute" an agreement under which China would increase its purchases of U.S. goods.

Mnuchin and other Trump administration officials held talks last week with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, focused on trying to resolve the trade dispute.

The Trump administration had threatened to impose up to \$150 billion in tariffs on Chinese products, part of an effort to address the U.S.-China trade imbalance and to penalize China for forcing American companies to turn over technology in exchange for access to the Chinese market. China responded by targeting \$50 billion in U.S. products.

But Mnuchin said Sunday that last week's talks resulted in "very meaningful progress," including an agreement from Chinese leaders to increase their purchase of American goods. He would not confirm reports that China had offered to increase its purchases by \$200 billion.

"We have specific targets, I'm not going to disclose what they are," Mnuchin told Fox News' Chris Wallace.

Mnuchin said Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will be traveling to China to follow up on "hard commitments" from the Chinese to increase purchases in the U.S. energy and agriculture sectors.

Mnuchin denied that the Chinese concessions were a result of Trump's promise to help ZTE, a Chinese telecom giant, wiggle out of U.S. sanctions after it was found to be illegally selling equipment to Iran and North Korea.

The U.S. Commerce Department has accused ZTE of violating a March 2017 settlement, in which the firm agreed to pay \$1.19 billion for illegally shipping telecommunications equipment to Iran and North Korea.

Last weekend, Trump suggested he wanted the U.S. to go easy on ZTE, tweeting that he was working with Chinese President Xi Jinping "to give massive Chinese phone company, ZTE, a way to get back into business, fast." In the tweet, Trump said he had instructed the Commerce Department to help ZTE because "too many jobs" were being lost in China.

"We didn't agree to any quid pro quo," Mnuchin said. "That was completely independent of our trade negotiations."

The Treasury chief said all Trump did was ask Ross to look into the ZTE matter, and any changes made to that settlement will be about "protecting American technology" and American jobs.

"This is an enforcement issue," Mnuchin said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Mnuchin Says Trump Putting Trade War With China 'On Hold'

By David J. Lynch

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the Trump administration is putting its trade war with China "on hold" after two days of talks in Washington that he said had produced agreement on increased Chinese purchases of American products and measures to make it easier for U.S. companies to operate in China.

President Trump had threatened to impose tariffs on \$150 billion in Chinese imports unless China made widespread changes in industrial policies that he said required U.S. companies to surrender technology secrets to do business in China. Mnuchin said the two sides have agreed on a "framework" to avoid the sanctions that requires China to lower tariffs on unspecified American goods, protect U.S. technology and buy more made-in-the-USA items.

"Right now we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will be dispatched to Beijing "immediately" to work out the details of accelerated Chinese purchases, said Mnuchin, who led the U.S. delegation in the talks with a Chinese team headed by Vice Premier Liu He.

The treasury secretary, a former Goldman Sachs banker, would not comment on reports that China had balked at agreeing to a U.S. request for \$200 billion in increased annual purchases, a figure that many economists regard as impossible to execute. Instead, he said the two sides had

agreed on specific targets for individual sectors, such as agriculture and energy.

"We expect to see a very big increase, 35 to 45 percent increases in agriculture this year alone," Mnuchin said. "In energy, doubling the energy purchases. I think you could see \$50 billion to \$60 billion a year of energy purchases over the next three to five years."

Other administration officials have suggested China might buy enormous quantities of liquefied natural gas, though there are questions about the volumes that the limited U.S. export infrastructure could handle.

Mnuchin's remarks came one day after the United States and China released a joint statement that appeared to take a step back from a potential trade war. Larry Kudlow, director of the National Economic Council, said Friday that China had agreed to buy "at least \$200 billion" more from the United States each year. On Sunday, Kudlow appeared to back away from that claim, saying on ABC News's "This Week" that "there's no agreement for a deal. We never anticipated one. There's a communique between the two great countries. That's all."

Some Trump supporters already are questioning whether the administration has blinked in its confrontation with China. "Not good enough. Time to take the gloves off," former steel executive Dan DiMicco tweeted Saturday.

Mnuchin said the president "can always decide to put the tariffs back on if China doesn't go through with their commitments."

Amid concerns that Trump was also preparing to soften the punishment for a major Chinese telecom company that had illegally traded with Iran and North Korea, Mnuchin said the administration "didn't agree to any quid pro quo."

Chinese President Xi Jinping asked his American counterpart to "look into" a Commerce Department enforcement action against ZTE that threatened to put the company out of business. After ZTE violated the terms of a 2017 settlement of criminal and civil charges, the department slapped a seven-year ban on U.S. suppliers doing business with the company. Last week, after Trump directed the Commerce Department in a tweet to help the company return to normal operations, lawmakers from both parties objected. The Republican-controlled House Appropriations Committee amended a must-pass annual spending bill to bar the department from lifting the penalties.

"I can assure you that the president wants us to be very tough on ZTE, and all he did was ask the secretary to look into this," Mnuchin said.

Mnuchin also suggested Trump was prepared to wait until 2019 to wrap up negotiations aimed at a new North American trade deal. He confirmed that the United States, Mexico and Canada remain "far apart" after nine months of talks, having missed House Speaker Paul D. Ryan's deadline

last week to have a deal on which lawmakers could vote this year.

"The president is more determined to have a good deal than he is worried about any deadline," the treasury secretary said.

U.S. Putting New Tariffs On Hold While Negotiating With China, Mnuchin Says

By Andrew Mayeda

Los Angeles Times, May 20, 2018

The Trump administration won't impose tariffs on Chinese products for now, after the two nations made progress on trade issues during two days of talks, Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin said.

"We're putting the trade war on hold. So right now, we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

President Trump had threatened to impose tariffs on as much as \$150 billion in Chinese imports to punish Beijing over alleged violations of American intellectual property and unfair trade practices. China vowed to retaliate with tariffs on everything from soybeans to airplanes.

Mnuchin's remarks will be a relief to investors, who had feared the world's two biggest economies were on the brink of an all-out trade conflict. The International Monetary Fund has warned that a global trade war would undermine the broadest global upswing in years.

Still, when asked Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation" whether Trump had taken the threat of tariffs off the table, Larry Kudlow, Trump's top economic advisor, said, "I don't think we're at that stage yet."

"Tariffs are part of any negotiation, and tariffs maybe have to be part of any enforcement," Kudlow said. "You cannot do this kind of major change without using everything that's in your quiver."

Switching positions

It's also not clear how long any truce will last. Trump has often switched his position on trade issues. He has frequently declared that talks on a new North American Free Trade Agreement are going well, for example, only to threaten again to withdraw from the pact.

Mnuchin's comments came after the two nations on Saturday released a joint statement in which China proposed to "significantly increase purchases" of U.S. goods.

The statement released by the White House didn't place a dollar figure on the increased purchases by China, or address a comment on Friday by Kudlow suggesting that Beijing had agreed to slash its annual trade surplus with the U.S. by \$200 billion. The U.S. had a \$376-billion trade deficit in goods with China last year. The figure is \$337 billion when services are added.

Rough estimate

Kudlow on Sunday downplayed the significance of the \$200 billion figure, saying on CBS that "maybe I got ahead of the curve" and during a separate interview on ABC's "This Week" that "both sides have used that as a rough ballpark estimate."

Vice Premier Liu He, a special envoy of Chinese President Xi Jinping, told reporters in Washington that talks with Mnuchin, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer ended with a pledge not to engage in a trade war, according to the state-run Xinhua News Agency.

"We made very meaningful progress, and we agreed on a framework. The framework includes their agreement to substantially reduce the trade deficit by increasing their purchases of goods," Mnuchin said. He said the two sides have agreed to numerical targets but he didn't want to disclose them.

The Chinese are offering to make structural reforms such as lowering tariffs and other import barriers that will allow the U.S. to export "billions and billions" of additional goods to China, Kudlow said on ABC.

'Positive mood'

"We made a lot of progress here in Washington and built on what happened in China," Kudlow said. "The president is in a very positive mood about this. I myself am very encouraged."

The joint statement between the two nations said both sides agreed on "meaningful increases" in U.S. agriculture and energy exports and that the U.S. will send a team to China to work out the details. Kudlow said Ross is going to the Asian nation and will be "looking into a number of areas where we're going to have greatly, significant increases," including energy, agriculture and manufacturing.

Even so, U.S. lawmakers will probably have pointed questions about what the administration has agreed to give up in exchange for a truce with China. In a major reversal, Trump instructed his administration last week to come up with a penalty against Chinese telecom-equipment maker ZTE Corp. that allows the company to stay in business. The Commerce Department had banned ZTE from receiving imports from its U.S. suppliers, a move that crippled the corporation.

'Real backlash'

The administration would face a "real backlash" if it offers concessions to ZTE as part of the trade talks, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) told Fox News.

Kudlow said on ABC that although there may be "perhaps some small changes around the edges" in U.S. action on ZTE, there will still be big fines and other remedies, and, he added, "do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free. It ain't gonna happen."

During the trade talks, the delegations discussed expanding trade in manufactured goods, and each side

agreed to strengthen cooperation on intellectual property. China will "advance relevant amendments" to its laws and regulations in that area, including its patent law, the White House said.

"If we can fix the technology stealing, which is so important in this China story, and we can get these market openings, this will be good for American export sales," Kudlow said on ABC. "I think it's good for Chinese growth. We will have come a long way."

The White House joint statement didn't mention additional U.S. demands, including a halt to subsidies and other government support for the Made in China 2025 plan that targets strategic industries from robotics to new-energy vehicles. China had made its own demands, including giving equal treatment to its investment, and warned U.S. companies may be excluded from measures to open its economy.

"This round of talks is generally positive," said Li Yong, a senior fellow at the China Assn. of International Trade in Beijing, adding that the U.S. still may take a harder line on reviews of Chinese investments. "Trade tensions will ease gradually, but there still could be frictions."

US, China Putting Trade War On Hold After Progress In Talks

By Martin Crutsinger And Paul Wiseman
Associated Press, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and China are pulling back from the brink of a trade war after the world's two biggest economies reported progress in talks aimed at bringing down America's massive trade deficit with Beijing.

"We are putting the trade war on hold," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday.

After high-level talks Thursday and Friday in Washington, Beijing agreed in a joint statement with the U.S. to "substantially reduce" America's trade deficit with China, but did not commit to cut the gap by any specific amount. The Trump administration had sought to slash the deficit by \$200 billion.

Still, Mnuchin said the two countries had made "meaningful progress" and that the administration has agreed to put on hold proposed tariffs on up to \$150 billion in Chinese products. China had promised to retaliate in a move that threatened a tit for tat trade war.

He said they expect to see a big increase — 35 percent to 45 percent this year alone — in U.S. farm sales to China. Mnuchin also forecast a doubling in sales of U.S. energy products to the Chinese market, increasing energy exports by \$50 billion to \$60 billion in the next three years to five years.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who has been part of the U.S. negotiating team, will go to China soon to follow up on last week's discussions, Mnuchin said.

In Saturday's statement, Beijing committed to "significantly increase" its purchases of American goods and services, saying the increase would "meet the growing consumption needs of the Chinese people and the need for high-quality economic development."

Last year, the U.S. had a record \$376 billion deficit with China in the trade of goods; that was the largest by far with any nation.

Trade analysts were not surprised that China refused to agree to a numerical target for cutting the trade gap, but they said the talks probably were more successful in easing trade tensions.

"The Trump administration seems eager to engineer at minimum a temporary peace with China to ensure a smooth run-up to the Kim-Trump summit in June," Cornell University economist Eswar Prasad said, referring to the June 12 meeting scheduled between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

If there is success in the U.S.-China discussions, analysts suggest it likely would involve the countries' presidents this fall before the November elections.

"Part of the good news for markets: As long as both sides continue to be 'constructively' engaged, imposition of additional tariffs by either side is very unlikely," analysts at investment management firm Evercore ISI said in a research note. "There is no reason for either side — particularly the U.S. — to destroy the process that both sides are building, which is what imposing tariffs would do."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., praised the administration's efforts with China.

"It's smart to engage China on trade abuses, and it would also be smart to get them more involved in trying to help us with North Korea," Graham said.

Trump campaigned in 2016 on a pledge to get tough on China and other U.S. trading partners. He views the U.S. trade deficit with China as evidence that Beijing is engaged in abusive trading practices and has outmaneuvered previous U.S. administrations.

Last August, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer began investigating Beijing's strong-arm tactics to challenge U.S. technological dominance. These include outright cybertheft of U.S. companies' trade secrets and China's demands that American corporations hand over technology in exchange for access to the Chinese markets.

Last month, the administration proposed tariffs on \$50 billion of Chinese imports to protest the forced technology transfers. Trump later ordered Lighthizer to seek up to an additional \$100 billion in Chinese products to tax.

China responded by targeting \$50 billion in U.S. products, including soybeans — a shot at Trump supporters in America's heartland. The prospect of an escalating trade war has shaken financial markets and alarmed business leaders.

In a separate controversy, the Commerce Department last month blocked China's ZTE Corp. from importing American components for seven years, accusing the telecommunications company of misleading U.S. regulators after it settled charges last year of violating sanctions against Iran and North Korea.

The ban amounted to a death sentence for ZTE, which relies heavily on U.S. parts, and the company announced that it was halting operations. A week ago, Trump tweeted that he was working with Chinese President Xi Jinping to put ZTE "back in business, fast." Media reports suggested that the U.S. was offering to swap a ZTE rescue for an end to proposed Chinese tariffs on U.S. farm products.

Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, called Trump's intervention in the case "outrageous" and said that using ZTE "as a bargaining chip ... is not in the best interests of our national security."

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said there could be "some small changes around the edges" in the sanctions against ZTE. But Kudlow added: "Do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free. It ain't gonna happen."

Mnuchin and Graham appeared on "Fox News Sunday," Warner spoke on CNN's "State of the Union" and Kudlow was interviewed on ABC's "This Week."

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U.S. Suspending New Tariffs While Negotiating Trade With China, Mnuchin Says

By Alan Rappeport And Noah Weiland
New York Times, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — The United States has put on hold its plan to impose sweeping tariffs on Chinese products as it presses forward with negotiations to reduce its trade deficit with Beijing, a top priority of President Trump.

Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, said on Sunday that the two countries had made progress as they concluded two days of intense trade negotiations in Washington late last week. The planned tariffs on \$150 billion worth of Chinese goods are off the table while the talks proceed, he said.

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mr. Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

After finishing the talks in Washington, the two sides released a joint statement on Saturday that offered little detail about what had been decided. Mr. Mnuchin said on Sunday that they had agreed on a "framework" under which China would increase its purchases of American goods, while putting in place "structural" changes to protect American

technology and to make it easier for American companies to compete in China.

While American officials had signaled last week that China had agreed to increase purchases by \$200 billion, Mr. Mnuchin declined to confirm that figure. "We have very specific targets; I'm not going to disclose what they are," Mr. Mnuchin said. "They go industry by industry."

He suggested that under a deal, China would make big increases in its purchases of American agricultural products and energy over the next several years.

Larry Kudlow, Mr. Trump's chief economic adviser, said on Sunday that the \$200 billion number was a "rough ballpark estimate" that both sides had used. It is a figure that simply "interests the president a lot," he said, and is not an indication that a deal of that size is imminent.

"They are offering to make structural reforms, such as lower tariffs and lowering nontariff barriers, which will permit us to export billions and billions more goods to China," Mr. Kudlow said of China on ABC's "This Week" program. "That's the elementary point. That's the key point."

Economists have voiced doubts about the \$200 billion figure, an amount equivalent to more than half the annual American trade deficit with China. They say it would be difficult to increase American exports by anything close to that figure, given structural hurdles in China and limits to how much the United States could increase its production of goods.

Mr. Mnuchin rejected the notion that the United States as part of the trade talks was revisiting its penalties on ZTE, the Chinese telecommunications company that has been crippled by a Commerce Department ban that prevents it from buying American components. Mr. Mnuchin said that there had been no "quid pro quo" relating to ZTE and the trade talks, but that President Xi Jinping of China had asked Mr. Trump to consider offering relief to the company.

Mr. Trump has faced bipartisan criticism for appearing to relent on ZTE, which is accused of failing to punish employees who violated trade controls against Iran and North Korea.

Mr. Mnuchin insisted that the Trump administration was not "going easy" on China over ZTE or the trade talks. He said that Mr. Trump wanted to be "very tough" on ZTE, and that the tariffs could be put back in place if the trade negotiations collapsed. In addition, the Treasury Department is due to unveil Chinese investment restrictions this week.

"He could always decide to put the tariffs back on if China doesn't go through with their commitments," Mr. Mnuchin said.

Mr. Kudlow, in his appearance on ABC, suggested a path that could lead to ZTE's revival, but said it would be arduous.

"If any of the remedies are altered, they are still going to be very, very tough, including big fines, compliance

measures, new management, new boards. The question is whether there are perhaps some small changes around the edges," Mr. Kudlow said. "I think President Trump is doing this because there's some very good feeling between him and China."

"Do not, please, do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free," he added. "It ain't going to happen."

Mnuchin: China Trade War 'On Hold'

By Zachary Warmbrodt And Doug Palmer
Politico, May 20, 2018

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday that the Trump administration will hold off from imposing tariffs on China as leaders from both nations try to hammer out agreements on trade.

The administration had earlier threatened \$50 billion to \$150 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods as a way to deter the theft of U.S. intellectual property and forced transfers of technology.

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mnuchin said in an interview on "Fox News Sunday." "Right now, we have agreed to put tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework."

The U.S. and China conducted high-level talks in Washington in recent days. Mnuchin on Sunday outlined targets for boosting sales of agriculture and energy products.

"We are immediately going to follow this up with [Commerce Secretary Wilbur] Ross going there with very hard commitments in agriculture, where we expect to see a very big increase — 35-40 percent increases — in agriculture this year alone," Mnuchin said. "In energy, doubling the energy purchases. I think you could see \$50, 60 billion a year of energy purchases over the next three to five years. And strategically that's very important for us and very important for them."

Mnuchin declined to confirm whether China had agreed to a specific commitment to reduce the U.S. trade deficit with the country by \$200 billion.

"We have specific targets," Mnuchin said. "I'm not going to publicly disclose what they are. They go industry by industry."

Trump has repeatedly said China has taken advantage of trade deals, telling reporters on Thursday that the nation has become "very spoiled." On the campaign trail, he said tariffs would be necessary in some cases to show the U.S. is not playing games anymore.

Economist Steve Moore, who is close to the Trump administration after serving as an economic adviser to the campaign, said the teeter-totter nature of the China talks was quintessential Trump, offering that the latest turn was part of his negotiating tactics.

"If there is minimal progress, I do think Trump will impose tariffs on China. It was a major campaign promise of his. And this is a guy who keeps his promises," Moore said.

"I don't see him stepping back from his demand that China open up its markets," Moore added. "Trump is obsessed with the trade deficits ... and there is going to have to be some kind of deal that brings down the China trade deficit."

Removing the threat of tariffs is good news for the tech industry, said Dean Garfield, president and CEO of the Information Technology Industry Council, a lobby group for Amazon, Google and others.

But Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Sunday that it is up to Trump's team not to "blow it" with China.

"There is nothing wrong with these talks but the proof of the pudding is in the eating," Schumer said in a statement. "If President Xi is going to escape meaningful punishment for ZTE and fail to take strong actions on intellectual property, cyber theft, and American companies having free access to sell goods in China, and instead simply provide a promise to buy goods for the next few years, we will have lost."

Schumer was referring to the Chinese technology company ZTE, which faces stiff penalties for violating U.S. sanctions against North Korea and Iran. Trump said last week that he would look into helping the company escape some of its harshest penalties. After talking with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump wrote on Twitter that he and Xi were working together to get ZTE back in business "fast."

On Sunday, Larry Kudlow, director of the White House National Economic Council, said ZTE would not get off "scot-free."

Kudlow also said Sunday that Trump has not completely abandoned the possibility of imposing tariffs on Chinese goods if Beijing doesn't address U.S. concerns about intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers.

"Look, I don't think we're at that stage yet ... The details will be down the road. These things are not so precise. Macroeconomics plays a big role. But our view is China must open up. They must become fair traders," Kudlow said.

Brent D. Griffiths and Christopher Cadelago contributed to this report.

U.S. Puts Tariffs Against China 'On Hold,' Mnuchin Says

By Andrew Mayeda And Mark Niquette
Bloomberg News, May 20, 2018

The Trump administration won't impose tariffs on Chinese products for now, after the two nations made progress on trade issues during two days of talks, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.

"We're putting the trade war on hold. So right now, we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

President Donald Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on as much as \$150 billion in Chinese imports to punish Beijing for allegedly violating American intellectual property and unfair trade practices. China vowed to retaliate with tariffs on everything from soybeans to airplanes.

Mnuchin's remarks will be a relief to investors, who had feared the world's two biggest economies were on the brink of an all-out trade conflict. The International Monetary Fund has warned that a global trade war would undermine the broadest global upswing in years.

Still, when asked on CBS's "Face the Nation" Sunday whether Trump has taken the threat of tariffs off the table, Larry Kudlow, Trump's top economic adviser, said, "I don't think we're at that stage yet."

"Tariffs are part of any negotiation, and tariffs maybe have to be part of any enforcement," Kudlow said. "You cannot do this kind of major change without using everything that's in your quiver." **Switching Positions**

It's also not clear how long any truce will last. Trump has often switched his position on trade issues. He has frequently declared that talks on a new North American Free Trade Agreement are going well, for example, only to threaten again to withdraw from the pact.

Mnuchin's comments came after the two nations on Saturday released a joint statement in which China proposed to "significantly increase purchases" of U.S. goods.

The statement released by the White House didn't place a dollar figure on the increased purchases by China, or address a comment on Friday by Kudlow suggesting that Beijing had agreed to slash its annual trade surplus with the U.S. by \$200 billion. The U.S. had a \$376 billion trade deficit in goods with China last year. The shortfall was \$337 billion when services are added. **Rough Estimate**

Kudlow on Sunday downplayed the significance of the \$200 billion figure, saying on CBS that "maybe I got ahead of the curve" and during a separate interview on ABC's "This Week" that "both sides have used that as a rough ballpark estimate."

Vice Premier Liu He, a special envoy of China's President Xi Jinping, told reporters in Washington that talks with Mnuchin, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer ended with a pledge not to engage in a trade war, according to a Xinhua news agency report.

"We made very meaningful progress and we agreed on a framework. The framework includes their agreement to substantially reduce the trade deficit by increasing their purchases of goods," Mnuchin said. He said the two sides have agreed to numerical targets but he didn't want to disclose them.

The Chinese are offering to make structural reforms such as lowering tariffs and other import barriers that will allow the U.S. to export "billions and billions" of additional goods to China, Kudlow said on ABC. **Positive Mood**

"We made a lot of progress here in Washington and built on what happened in China," Kudlow said. "The president is in a very positive mood about this. I myself am very encouraged."

The joint statement between the two nations said both sides agreed on "meaningful increases" in U.S. agriculture and energy exports and that the U.S. will send a team to China to work out the details. Kudlow said Ross is going to the Asian nation and will be "looking into a number of areas where we're going to have greatly, significant increases," including energy, agriculture and manufacturing.

Even so, U.S. lawmakers will probably have pointed questions about what the administration has agreed to give up in exchange for a truce with China. In a major reversal, Trump instructed his administration last week to come up with a penalty against Chinese telecom-equipment maker ZTE Corp. that allows the company to stay in business. The Commerce Department had banned ZTE from receiving imports from its U.S. suppliers, a move that crippled ZTE. **'Real Backlash'**

The administration would face a "real backlash" if it offers concessions to ZTE as part of the trade talks, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham told Fox News.

Kudlow said on ABC that while there may be "perhaps some small changes around the edges" in U.S. action on ZTE, there will still be big fines and other remedies and "do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free. It ain't gonna happen."

During the trade talks, the delegations discussed expanding trade in manufactured goods, and each side agreed to strengthen cooperation on intellectual property. China will "advance

relevant amendments" to its laws and regulations in that area, including its patent law, the White House said.

"If we can fix the technology stealing, which is so important in this China story, and we can get these market openings, this will be good for American export sales," Kudlow said on ABC. "I think it's good for Chinese growth. We will have come a long way."

The White House joint statement didn't mention additional U.S. demands, including a halt to subsidies and other government support for the Made in China 2025 plan that targets strategic industries from robotics to new-energy vehicles. China had made its own demands, including giving equal treatment to its investment, and warned U.S. companies may be excluded from measures to open its economy.

"This round of talks is generally positive," said Li Yong, a senior fellow at the China Association of International Trade in Beijing, adding that the U.S. still may take a harder line on

reviews of Chinese investments. "Trade tensions will ease gradually, but there still could be frictions."

— With assistance by Ben Brody, and Elizabeth Dexheimer

Mnuchin Says China Tariffs Are 'on Hold' As Officials Hold Deficit Talks

By Marisa Schultz

[New York Post](#), May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said US tariffs on China are "on hold" as the two economic powerhouses have reached a framework to reduce the trade deficit with China.

President Trump had previously threatened up to \$150 billion in tariffs on Chinese imports over accusations of intellectual property theft.

The US braced for an economic collision as Trump declared in March: "Trade wars are good and easy to win."

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mnuchin told "Fox News Sunday." "Right now, we have agreed to put tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework."

After rounds of trade talks with China, Mnuchin said: "We have an agreement with China that they will substantially agree to it."

The secretary declined to say whether the agreement sets a specific target of \$200 billion to reduce the trade deficit, but he said the deal has goals for each industry.

"We are immediately going to follow this up with [Commerce] Secretary [Wilbur] Ross going there with very hard commitments in agriculture, where we expect to see a very big increase — 35-40 percent increases — in agriculture this year alone," Mnuchin said.

"In energy, doubling the energy purchases. I think that you could see \$50, \$60 billion a year of energy purchases over the next three to five years. And strategically, that's very important for us and very important for them."

U.S., China Putting Trade War On Hold, Treasury's Mnuchin Says

[Reuters](#), May 20, 2018

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Mnuchin: Trade War With China Is 'On Hold'

By Kyle Balluck And Brett Samuels

[The Hill](#), May 20, 2018

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Sunday that a trade war with China is "on hold."

"We're putting the trade war on hold," Mnuchin said on "Fox News Sunday."

"We have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework," he added.

In an exclusive interview, @stevenmnuchin1 tells Chris: "We're putting the trade war on hold, so right now we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework." [pic.twitter.com/fJXKozKxK5](#)— FoxNewsSunday (@FoxNewsSunday) May 20, 2018

Chinese state media, meanwhile, also reported that Washington and Beijing have agreed to back off on tariffs.

"The two sides reached a consensus, will not fight a trade war, and will stop increasing tariffs on each other," Vice-Premier Liu He said, according to Agence France-Presse.

The apparent detente comes a day after the U.S. and China released a joint statement saying the two nations agreed to take measures to "substantially reduce the United States trade deficit in goods with China."

"Both sides agreed on meaningful increases in United States agriculture and energy exports," the statement said.

Mnuchin on Sunday would not specify how much in American products the Chinese would buy. He suggested the Trump administration could reimpose tariffs if China does not follow through.

Senior U.S. officials — including Mnuchin, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross — met in recent days with Chinese officials as the two nations attempted to broker an agreement and avoid a trade war.

Last Thursday, President Trump tempered expectations about whether the talks would be fruitful. The two nations have spent recent months exchanging threats of steep tariffs.

"You've never seen people come over from China to work on a trade deal. Now, will that be successful? I tend to doubt it," Trump told reporters.

"China's become very spoiled ... because they always got 100 percent of whatever they wanted from the United States," Trump said. "But we can't allow that to happen anymore."

Updated at 12:35 p.m.

Treasury, USTR Send Mixed Messages Over Tariffs On Chinese Imports

Mixed signals from officials could further complicate the Trump administration's trade agenda

By Josh Zumbrun

[Wall Street Journal](#), May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Don't Get Distracted By The Trade Deficit With China

Its external imbalances have been declining for a decade. The U.S. should seek more of the same.

By Jason Furman

[Wall Street Journal](#), May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

China Is Winning Trump's Trade War

By Heather Long

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

It was easy to miss the U.S.-China trade statement that the White House released Saturday, right in the midst of royal wedding mania. But it's hard to hide that China looks as if it's winning President Trump's trade skirmish — so far.

The statement said that, after several days of talks, the Chinese agreed to "substantially" reduce the United States' \$375 billion trade deficit with China and that the details would be worked out later. It was noticeably vague.

Notice China didn't agree to a specific amount. On Friday, Trump's top economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, was telling reporters that the Chinese had agreed to reduce the deficit by "at least" \$200 billion. China quickly denied that, and, a day later, the official statement didn't have a concrete number, a seeming victory for the Chinese.

What about the IP fight? The real battle against the Chinese was supposed to be over intellectual property theft, which the Trump administration says has been going on for years and costs the U.S. economy \$225 billion to \$600 billion a year. Trump was supposed to get the Chinese to stop stealing U.S. business secrets and technology. On this front, the statement was brief and lackluster, saying that both sides agreed to "strengthen cooperation" (diplomatic speak for not doing much) and that China would "advance relevant amendments" to its patent law. It remains to be seen whether that happens (and whether China enforces any new laws).

Reaction to the announcement was mostly negative, even among people who are usually Trump allies. Dan DiMicco, a former steel CEO who has been a big supporter of Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs, tweeted shortly after the statement came out, "Not good enough. Time to take the gloves off." He followed that up with: "Did [the] president just blink? China and friends appear to be carrying the day." Fox Business anchor Lou Dobbs summed up the situation this way: "Chinese say 'no deal.'"

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) tweeted, "Why do U.S. officials always fall for China trickery?" Wall Street Journal trade reporter Bob Davis tweeted that the big takeaway is: "Trump administration gets rolled by the Chinese."

Here's a rundown of the many ways China appears to have gotten the upper hand.

China's "concessions" are things it planned to do anyway. The Chinese have one of the fastest-growing economies and middle classes in the world. Chinese factories and cities need more energy, and its people want more meat. It's no surprise then that China said it was interested in buying more U.S. energy and agricultural products. The Trump administration is trying to cast that as a win because

the United States will be able to sell more to China, but it was almost certain that the Chinese were going to buy more of that stuff anyway.

What Trump got from the Chinese is "the kind of deal that China would be able to offer any U.S. president," said Brad Setser, a China expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. "China has to import a certain amount of energy from someone and needs to import either animal feed or meat to satisfy Chinese domestic demand."

China has been buying about \$20 billion worth of U.S. agricultural products a year and \$7 billion in oil and gas, according to government data. Even if China doubled — or tripled — purchases of these items, it won't equal anywhere near a \$200 billion reduction in the trade deficit.

The United States agreed to suspend tariffs. Chinese officials sold the talks as a win for them back home, telling state-run media that the United States had agreed to "not to launch a trade war and to stop slapping tariffs against each other." Chinese media called this the most important result of the talks.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin confirmed that the tariffs are now "on hold" when he appeared on "Fox News Sunday."

Yes, it's good for both sides not to be in a trade war, but the Chinese had more to lose economically from the tariffs. The Trump administration rolling back its \$150 billion tariff threat against China is a good "get" for the Chinese.

China had leverage ahead of the North Korea summit. Trump wants the summit with North Korea on June 12 to go well. It would be a huge breakthrough for the United States and the world and a significant achievement for his administration. The Chinese understand Trump needs them to help make this happen, and they reportedly expected Trump to be more amenable on trade while North Korea is in play. Trump even expressed openness to rolling back restrictions on the Chinese tech firm ZTE, a surprise to many.

"A U.S.-China trade disconnect or worse at this juncture only would detract and distract from mutual progress on North Korea," said Terry Haines, managing director of research and advisory firm Evercore ISI.

It's unlikely that there will be new limits on Chinese investment in the United States. Another Chinese goal is to be able to invest more in the United States. Mnuchin is supposed to be working on strong curbs to Chinese investment in America, another tough measure to show the Chinese that if they won't play fair and let U.S. companies fully operate in China, then America isn't going to be so open to Chinese firms and money.

Monday is the deadline for Mnuchin to "report progress" on the investment barriers. Now it looks as if those limitations are on hold, too, according to a lobbyist familiar with the deliberations who isn't authorized to speak publicly about the

administration's decision-making and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Derek Scissors, a China expert at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute who advised the Trump administration on China trade last year, also thinks Mnuchin won't push this week for any further blocks on Chinese investment in the United States.

"Mnuchin never had any intention of recommending anything serious that I know," Scissors said.

Zero curbs on China's high-tech plans. There was little in the Saturday statement about IP protections and nothing about China altering its plans for high-tech growth and domination (President Xi Jinping's "China 2025" plan). When the Trump administration originally presented China with a list of demands, it included China agreeing to stop subsidizing its tech companies.

It was always unlikely that the United States would get China to alter its marquee economic growth plan, but it's yet another reminder that the Chinese gave a few concessions on things that aren't sacrifices for China.

China appears to have the upper hand, but this is just the beginning. This is only round one of lengthy negotiations between the two nations on trade, and it was conducted by various secretaries and advisers. Even Kudlow said Sunday that this can't be considered a deal yet. Much could change when Trump and Xi meet face-to-face.

But so far, the Chinese are pitching Trump a "deal" that doesn't alter much on their end. There's hope on both sides of the aisle (and in many parts of America) that Trump will hold out for more.

Confusion And Squabbling Undermine Trump's Steps Forward On The World Stage

By Philip Rucker And Ashley Parker

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

On North Korea, the government of dictator Kim Jong Un threatened to walk away from a planned summit after bellicose words from national security adviser John Bolton — who was then publicly overruled by President Trump.

On China, trade negotiations have been undermined by fierce infighting among Trump's own advisers — including a profane shouting match in Beijing between two members of the economic team.

And the pattern is evident on domestic policies as well. Trump has undercut his own aides and Republican congressional leaders with sudden threats to shut down the government over his promised wall at the border with Mexico.

As an emboldened Trump reaches for historic triumphs in hopes of bolstering his party's prospects in November's midterm elections, he finds himself repeatedly stymied by his old patterns of chaos and contradiction.

Trump's agenda has been undermined by mixed messages and internal squabbles from within his administration — all compounded by the president's own lack of discipline and his inconsistent ideology.

"It's very, very volatile," said Thomas Wright, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "Normally, there are different factions, and they both fight within the bureaucratic process for their viewpoints . . . but this is much more freewheeling, and the most volatile person is the president."

"It creates confusion and uncertainty and undermines their initiatives," he added.

Amy Zegart, co-director of the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, said "the one consistent policy that Trump seems to have is that America is getting a raw deal in the world, but how to address that raw deal varies day to day and hour to hour. It is enormously important to have message discipline, and this administration is fundamentally unable to have it."

That lack of discipline has been on vivid display over North Korea. Bolton complicated the delicate preparations for a historic summit between Trump and Kim, scheduled for June 12 in Singapore, by saying the United States planned to ask North Korea to emulate the "Libya model" from a 2003 nuclear deal — to which the North Koreans attribute Moammar Gaddafi's eventual downfall and death eight years later.

But after Pyongyang cited those remarks in threatening to cancel the summit, Trump promised Thursday that his administration would demand no such thing and that under a nuclear agreement, Kim would have protections and be "very, very happy."

"He'd be in his country," Trump said. "He'd be running his country. His country would be very rich."

Still, there remains uncertainty about whether the summit will take place, even as White House officials are busy scouting locations and finalizing itineraries. And Trump has seemed to enjoy taking part in chatter that his work toward denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula could earn him the Nobel Peace Prize, an honor that was bestowed upon former president Barack Obama in only his 11th month in office.

With China, meanwhile, Trump is progressing in negotiations to reduce the U.S. trade deficit, which would fulfill a major campaign promise.

The White House on Saturday released a joint statement from both countries announcing an agreement for China to buy more goods and services from the United States, including agriculture and energy exports, with the stated goal of "substantially" reducing the U.S. trade deficit in goods.

But disputes within the Trump administration have burst into public view, projecting disarray when the team has sought to present a united front.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, a hard-line nationalist who penned the book "Death by China," got into an expletive-laced shouting match with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin during their recent trip to Beijing, where Trump had sent them to negotiate trade policy with the Chinese government.

And back in Washington, Trump abruptly ordered his own Commerce Department to scale back the severe penalties it had recently imposed on telecommunications giant ZTE. Trump's directive, which he later said was his answer to a personal plea from Chinese President Xi Jinping, came in a tweet that caught most of his top aides by surprise.

The Trump administration is hardly the first to have vigorous policy disagreements, but in past administrations, those debates largely played out in private, with the staff endeavoring to support the official White House policy in public.

But Trump enjoys, and even encourages, infighting, which often leads to those feuds spilling into the public arena.

"I like conflict," Trump said in March. "I like having two people with different points of view. And I certainly have that. And then I make a decision. But I like watching it. I like seeing it. I think it's the best way to go."

White House officials reject the premise that Trump's policy moves are sometimes overshadowed by episodes of conflict. They blame journalists for focusing on staff squabbles and scold them for not paying more attention to the president's achievements.

Trump's aides say that unwanted headlines — such as White House communications staffer Kelly Sadler joking about the irrelevance of Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) because, as she put it, "he's dying anyway" — do not impair meaningful progress on issues. One White House official cited Friday's summit on prison reform as an example of the quiet work that proceeds behind the scenes.

Peppered with questions earlier this month about a number of administration controversies, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters, "If you look at what he's doing every single day, he's showing up to work, he's working hard to make this country better, whether it's through building our economy, creating jobs, defeating ISIS, fixing our judiciary system, helping with the legal immigration problems that we have."

Most of Trump's advisers have emerged as fully formed public characters in their own right, complete with differing ideologies, backstories and personal agency. As the president has chosen aides who looked as if they were out of "central casting" and elevated them to players in his daily West Wing dramas, so, too, has the media covered them as such — chronicling the petty feuds and internal squabbles in the president's royal court.

"It's almost like an absolute monarch where the various feudal lords are coming to try to figure out whether they can

get something in or something out of whatever decision he's making," Zegart said. "It's astonishing."

Trump, who governs largely by impulse and instinct, lacks a clear traditional governing ideology on a range of topics, heightening divergent viewpoints.

"The president didn't have a very deeply held philosophical view of foreign policy and national security," said Kevin Madden, a Republican communications consultant. "But the policy hands around him have been working on and caring about these issues and have deeply held beliefs developed over the past 25 years."

In this particular era of social media and increased scrutiny on the White House, Madden added, "so much of this just ends up being litigated publicly."

Kudlow: China's ZTE Won't Get Off 'Scot-free'

By Zachary Warmbrodt

Politico, May 20, 2018

Giant Chinese phone-maker ZTE will not get off "scot-free" as the Trump administration considers easing penalties on the company amid broader trade negotiations with Beijing, top White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said Sunday.

President Donald Trump last week made a surprise announcement that he would try to help save Chinese jobs by asking the Commerce Department to relax law enforcement penalties imposed on ZTE for violating U.S. sanctions on telecommunications sales to North Korea and Iran.

In an interview Sunday on ABC's "This Week," Kudlow said penalties on ZTE would continue to be "very, very tough, including big fines, compliance measures, new management, new boards." The question, he said, is whether "there are perhaps some small changes around the edges."

"Do not, please, do not expect ZTE to get off scot-free," he said. "It ain't gonna happen."

The issue is on the table as the U.S. and China negotiate major changes to the trade balance between the two nations. American and Chinese officials held high-level talks in Washington in recent days.

Kudlow, the director of the White House National Economic Council, said Sunday that ZTE "may be part of the overall trade discussion, but it really is an enforcement action."

"I think President Trump is doing this because there's some very good feeling between him and China," he said.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a "Fox News Sunday" interview that it was not a trade issue and that "we didn't agree to any quid quo pro."

"I don't know why anybody's surprised about this," Mnuchin said. "President [Xi Jinping] asked President Trump to look into this. That's not a surprise. President Trump often asks other leaders to look into things that are important to our companies."

Trump's ZTE Push Could Imperil \$150 Million For Terrorism Victims

By Devlin Barrett

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

Families of terrorism victims are warning the Trump administration may negotiate away \$150 million that a Chinese firm was expected to pay for violating U.S. sanctions — a move that they say would send a terrible message to global firms thinking of doing business with rogue regimes.

At issue is President Trump's recent public statement urging the U.S. Commerce Department to find a way to help ZTE, a major Chinese telecom, stay in business. Advocates for terrorism attack victims say the remarks could have major consequences for a fund designed to compensate such victims.

Trump tweeted a week ago that he was working with China's president "to give massive Chinese phone company, ZTE, a way to get back into business, fast . . . Too many jobs in China lost. Commerce Department has been instructed to get it done!"

That message came days after ZTE said it would "cease major operating activities" because the Commerce Department had recently announced trade restrictions on the firm for violating the terms of a 2017 deal for the company's violations of U.S. sanctions.

Now, the Commerce Department is engaged in negotiations with ZTE that could ease the penalties against the firm, according to people familiar with the talks.

The president's instruction to Commerce to ease up on ZTE has led to speculation that the firm may have become a bargaining chip as the United States tries to extract trade concessions from China and get cooperation on sanctions against Iran and North Korea.

But to families who have lost loved ones to terrorism attacks, Trump's actions are important for entirely different reasons.

Under the terms of the 2017 plea deal ZTE struck with a number of U.S. government agencies, ZTE agreed to combined fines of nearly \$1.2 billion — but \$300 million of that was suspended, to be paid only if the company violated its deal with Commerce.

Now that Commerce has formally accused ZTE of lying during its settlement talks and probationary period about whether company employees had been punished for their conduct in violating sanctions, advocates had expected the U.S. to collect that \$300 million.

Under U.S. law, half of that money — \$150 million — would go into a fund created to compensate the families of victims of state-sponsored terrorism.

After the president's pronouncement, those families now fear the administration may back out of collecting that penalty on behalf of victims.

"As a government, we have to send the right signal to ZTE and other bad actors that the United States does not flounder or play when it comes to holding countries accountable that violate U.S. sanctions against state sponsors of terrorism," said Edith Bartley, whose brother and father were killed when al-Qaeda bombed U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998.

To Bartley and others, it makes no sense for an administration that prides itself as being tough on terrorism to suddenly go soft on firms that do business with terror-backing governments.

"Many of these victims of terrorism were serving their country, and the world is watching," she said. "North Korea is watching."

Stuart Newberger, a lawyer representing victims' families, said ZTE should have to pay even more than the \$300 million spelled out in last year's plea deal.

If the Trump administration lets ZTE off the hook for the payment, he said, "all that's going to do is encourage people to do business with terrorist states. So if the president is serious about going after Iran and terrorist states, they have to be serious about holding ZTE to the consequences of its conduct."

A Justice Department spokesman referred questions to the Commerce Department, where a spokeswoman declined to comment.

The fund was created by Congress several years ago for people who have won court judgments as victims of state-sponsored terrorism. To date, the fund has collected more than a billion dollars, principally from settlements with foreign banks accused of violating U.S. sanctions against Iran. Eligible recipients of the fund are those who have won court judgments from terrorism incidents during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, including those who were taken hostage at the U.S. Embassy in Iran in 1979 and the families of those killed in attacks on U.S. personnel in Lebanon during the 1980s.

Mnuchin: Trump Could Tolerate NAFTA Vote Slipping Into 2019

By Doug Palmer

Politico, May 20, 2018

President Donald Trump is more interested in striking a good deal with Canada and Mexico than quickly finishing North American Free Trade Agreement talks to get a vote in Congress this year, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday.

"The president is more determined to have a good deal than he's worried about any deadline," Mnuchin said in an interview on "Fox News Sunday."

"So, whether we pass it in this Congress or we pass it in the new Congress, the president is determined that we renegotiate NAFTA."

Still, that doesn't mean Trump will not follow through on threats to withdraw from the pact or take other action, if he decides that is the best option, Mnuchin indicated.

"He has all his alternatives. I'm just saying right now we're focused on negotiating a good deal and we're not focused on specific deadlines," Mnuchin said. "We're still far apart, but we're working every day to renegotiate this agreement."

The comments came after the Trump administration missed a deadline on Thursday set by House Speaker Paul Ryan for finishing the agreement. Ryan (R-Wis.) has said the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative needed to finish the negotiations by May 17 in order for Congress to vote on it this year because of various statutorily mandated notification and consultation periods involved in the consideration of trade deals.

Ryan amended his comment slightly on Thursday, saying there might be "wiggle room" for the U.S. trade representative to take an additional two weeks to finish the pact and still get a vote in Congress this year. But that assumes that the U.S. International Trade Commission does not take all of the 105 days it is allowed to do an economic analysis of the agreement, he said.

German Companies Worry Trump Moving Toward 'America Alone'

Reuters, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Oliver North, Incoming NRA Chief, Blames School Shootings On 'Culture Of Violence'

By Frances Stead Sellers And Michael Scherer

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

Two days after a 17-year-old opened fire in his Texas high school, killing at least 10, incoming National Rifle Association president Oliver North said students "shouldn't have to be afraid" to go to school and blamed the problem on "youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence" in which many young boys have "been on Ritalin" since early childhood.

"They've been drugged in many cases," he said.

Appearing on "Fox News Sunday," the retired Marine, best known for his role in the Iran-contra scandal in the 1980s, said, "You are not going to fix it by taking away the rights of law-abiding citizens."

Instead, he said, schools should look at fortifying their campuses, considering ingress and egress points and people's ability to enter buildings carrying weapons.

"If School Shield had been in place, [it's] far less likely that would have happened," North said, referring to an NRA

program that was introduced in the wake of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings and addresses best practices in security infrastructure, technology, personnel, training and policy.

There was a risk, North said, in "treating symptom without treating the disease." And the disease, he said, isn't the Second Amendment.

Santa Fe High School was considered a hardened target, with an active-shooter plan and two armed police officers on patrol. In the fall, school district leaders made plans to eventually arm teachers and staff under the state's school marshal program.

North, 74, is a high-profile choice to lead the NRA, which has faced mounting criticism since the Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., in which a gunman killed 17 people.

North, who previously appeared to criticize student activists who have been pushing for gun control, said today that they "are being used by forces far bigger than they are," including former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg and financier and philanthropist George Soros.

"I was not criticizing those kids," said North, who has said that the NRA was the victim of "civil terrorism."

Texas Lt Gov. Dan Patrick (R) blamed the social acceptance of abortion and violent video games for the epidemic of school gun violence.

"Should we be surprised in this nation? We have devalued life, whether it's through abortion, whether it's the breakup of families or violent movies, and particularly violent video games, which now outsell movies and music," he said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"Psychologists and psychiatrists will tell you that students are desensitized to violence. Many have lost empathy to their victims by watching hours and hours of video, violent games," he said.

Patrick also pointed to the bullying between adults and children on social media platforms. "We have to look at ourselves," he continued. "It's not about the guns; it's about us."

When asked about gun regulation, he said the responsibility starts at home and suggested that a crime may have been committed if the shooter in Santa Fe was able to take possession of his father's firearms. "Gun control starts at home — accountability for gun owners," he said. "We need the best background checks we have. We need to be very sensible about this."

Santa Fe High School was moving forward with a plan to arm teachers, which is legal under Texas law, at the time of the shooting. Patrick said he had talked to students who said the shooting might have been stopped if one of the teachers, a former Marine, had been carrying a gun. A school resource officer and a school district police chief had engaged the shooter.

He also suggested staggering start times at schools so that students could be funneled through just one or two entrances, a move that could allow law enforcement to more easily detect weapons.

"We cannot sit back and say it's the gun," Patrick said. "It's us as a nation."

At one point during the interview, ABC host George Stephanopoulos noted that violent video games are played by teenagers all over the world but that the United States, which has far more guns in circulation, was unique in its high rate of school gun violence.

"I can't compare one country with another country, because there are many variables in all these countries," Patrick said. "Here's what I know: We live in a violent culture that devalues life. Kids go to schools that are not as safe as government buildings."

Patrick was followed by the parents of victims of gun violence, who weighed in on his suggestions.

"I think those are the most idiotic comments I have ever heard regarding gun safety," said Fred Guttenberg, whose daughter, Jaime, 14, was killed in the February shooting in Parkland. "He should be removed from office."

On "Meet the Press," Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) took aim at the NRA on the issue of why Congress has not addressed gun violence.

"It's a three-letter word," Sanders said. "It's the NRA, and it's Trump and the Republicans who don't have the guts to stand up to these people."

North was followed on "Fox News Sunday" by retired NASA astronaut and gun-control activist Mark Kelly, whose wife, former congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, was critically injured in a 2011 attack in Tucson in which six people were killed.

Kelly agreed that schools had to offer students better protections but said more had to be done to prevent the proliferation of guns and to make sure that irresponsible people and criminals "can't get the gun in the first place."

"There are things that work," said Kelly, who described himself as a hunter who keeps his guns locked in a safe and advocated legislation that requires parents to safely store firearms.

Kelly, who said he owns eight guns, co-founded the Giffords organization with a mission "to encourage elected officials to stand up for solutions to prevent gun violence and protect responsible gun ownership."

The student gun-control activists who have spoken out since the Parkland shooting, he said, are "motivated, smart, articulate and angry." And, he continued, they have "a right to be angry."

The problem, Kelly said, is "not because we don't have enough guns."

If that were the issue, the United States would be the safest country in the world, Kelly said,

North said his goal as president of the NRA is to increase membership of the 6 million-strong organization by 1 million and then to ask every member to recruit one more, to form a 14 million-member group who can be "activists on the street."

In a tweet at the time of North's election, NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch called North a "total warrior for freedom" and "the last person that anti-gun advocates would want as the new President of the NRA board."

Incoming NRA President Oliver North Blames School Shootings On 'Culture Of Violence,' Ritalin

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

Incoming National Rifle Association President Oliver North says school shootings are the product of a "culture of violence," not the Second Amendment.

"The problem that we've got is we're trying like the dickens to treat the symptom without treating the disease," Mr. North said on "Fox News Sunday." "And the disease in this case isn't the Second Amendment. The disease is youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence."

He said everything from violence on television to Ritalin, a drug used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, may be contributing to the problem.

"Nearly all of these perpetrators are male, and they're young teenagers in most cases, and they've come through a culture where violence is commonplace," Mr. North said. "All we need to do is turn on a TV, go to a movie. If you look at what has happened to the young people, many of these young boys have been on Ritalin since they were in kindergarten. Now, I am certainly not a doctor; I'm a Marine. But I can see those kinds of things happening."

Ten students were killed and 13 injured Friday when confessed shooter Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, opened fire on his classmates at Santa Fe High School in Texas.

Mr. North recommended schools implement the NRA's School Shield program, which would allow certain staff members to carry firearms and provide training on how to respond to school shootings.

"If School Shield had been in place in Santa Fe High School, far less likely that that would have happened," he said.

Oliver North Looks To Recruit Millions To NRA

By Zachary Warmbrodt

Politico, May 20, 2018

Incoming National Rifle Association President Oliver North said Sunday that he wants to expand the powerful group's membership by millions as it looks to fend off gun control efforts amid an outbreak of fatal school shootings.

North outlined his plans in a "Fox News Sunday" interview after 10 people were killed Friday in a shooting at Santa Fe High School near Houston. The massacre has again prompted calls for Congress to take action.

North, best known for his role in the Iran-Contra scandal during the 1980s, said Sunday that he is looking at ways to more than double the NRA's membership of 6 million — an expansion aimed at boosting the group's political clout.

"My goal is a million more members," he said. "Then I'm going to go out and ask every NRA member to recruit one more. That will put 14 million activists on the street — not the types [billionaire philanthropist] George Soros is fielding, not the types that showed up down there in Dallas to protest our right to gather. But those who are going to vote for people who support the Second Amendment."

In discussing Friday's mass shooting, North reiterated the NRA position that guns are not to blame.

"We're trying like the dickens to treat the symptom without treating the disease. And the disease in this case isn't the Second Amendment," the former Marine lieutenant colonel said.

"The disease is youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence. They've been drugged, in many cases. Nearly all of these perpetrators are male. And they're young teenagers, in most cases. They've come through a culture where violence is commonplace — all you need to do is turn on a TV, go to a movie."

The NRA Versus The Constitution

Its top priority, 'concealed carry reciprocity,' would violate states' rights and cannot pass legal muster.

By Eric Tirschwell

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

After School Shooting, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick Says Guns Are 'Part Of Who We Are As A Nation'

By Christal Hayes

USA Today, May 20, 2018

Two days after the nation's latest school shooting, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said Sunday that guns are not the problem but "are part of who we are as a nation."

Instead, Patrick, offered a list of other options to curb gun violence: arming teachers, analyzing bullying and video games, staggering school start times and altering the layout of the state's 8,000 schools to limit the number of entrances and exits.

"But remember, we cannot sit back and say it's the gun," he told George Stephanopoulos on ABC's This Week. "It's us as a nation, George. On this Sunday morning when

we all go to church and pray or go to the synagogue or the mosque or wherever we go, let's look inward at ourself as a nation."

Stephanopoulos fired back: "But when we look inward, sir, aren't we going to find that guns are more available here in greater numbers, in greater lethality than any other developed country in the world?"

Patrick agreed there are more firearms in the U.S. but said the reality is that "it is our Second Amendment, you know, it talks about a well-run militia, the Second Amendment. Our teachers are part of that well-run militia, by the way. It's guns that also stop crimes."

Patrick isn't the first to call for arming teachers. He said the state already allows for the measure, but it's up to local school districts, schools and parents to decide whether they will allow it.

More than 170 school districts in Texas have taken advantage of the law, which was enacted after the 2012 massacre at a school in Newtown, Conn.

Patrick also repeated the suggestion he offered after Friday's shooting that killed 10 that school entrances be limited to one or two doors so authorities can better monitor the comings and goings of students, staff and strangers.

Fred Guttenberg, a father who lost his daughter Jamie in the Valentine's Day school shooting in Parkland, Fla., was outraged. Guttenberg, who followed Patrick's appearance on ABC, called the comments "idiotic" and said Patrick should be removed from office.

"Let me be clear, he should be removed from office for his failure to want to protect the citizens of Texas," Guttenberg said. "To hear him continue to make the argument after 10 people died in his state that guns are not the issue is simply a crock."

Also on Sunday, the National Rifle Association's incoming president, Oliver North, appeared on Fox News to talk about the shooting and gun rights.

He suggested schools add multiple metal detectors and that the core of the issue was tied to desensitizing violence. He also appeared to link school shootings to students who take prescriptions such as Ritalin.

"The problem that we've got is we're trying like the dickens to treat the symptom without treating the disease. And the disease, in this case, isn't the Second Amendment, the disease is youngsters who are steeped in a culture of violence," North said. "They've been drugged in many cases. Nearly all of these perpetrators are male."

He added, "If you look at what has happened to young people, many of these young boys have been on Ritalin since they were in kindergarten."

Later, North noted while there's "no way" to prevent a firearm from getting in a building, schools should do more to make it harder for a would-be shooter.

"If that means five metal detectors getting in and out of the high school, you get five metal detectors," he said.

While the attack at Santa Fe High School is at least the 20th school shooting of 2018, shooters over the years have targeted everything from nightclubs, churches, concerts to movie theaters.

Gun-control activists such as Nicole Hockley, founder of the Sandy Hook Promise, have pointed out that the increased security inside schools might be a step in the right direction but won't stop these massacres or address the larger issue.

"This isn't just about school shootings. This is about shootings everywhere," said Hockley, whose son, Dylan, was killed in the school shooting in Newtown. "This is happening in every community, every day. And there are actions that we can take. And prayers are very important. Talking about this is very important. Looking at issues around violence is important."

Contributing: Deirdre Shesgreen and John Moritz

Anti-Gun Backlash From School Shooting? Probably Not In Texas.

By Manny Fernandez, Jack Healy And Dave Montgomery

New York Times, May 20, 2018

SANTA FE, Tex. — One mile from the scene of the shooting that left 10 people dead at her school, Monica Bracknell, a senior at Santa Fe High School, approached Texas Gov. Greg Abbott in the lobby of Arcadia First Baptist Church here Sunday morning.

Her message was simple: The violence was not "a political issue," she told Mr. Abbott, explaining to reporters afterward that schools needed to be safer but restricting the availability of guns was not the way to achieve it.

After the February rampage at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., students there helped ignite the most successful push for action on gun control in decades in that state. There is little indication of anything similar in Texas, a place where guns are hard-wired into the state's psyche, Republicans control virtually all the levers of power, and where the victims of Friday's rampage in a conservative rural area are showing little of the anti-gun fervor that followed the Parkland shooting in a more diverse, suburban one.

In the wake of the tragedy, gun issues are likely to take on a new urgency in a few Texas political races, including Republican congressional districts that Democrats are trying to flip, but the debate is far more muted and dominated by support for gun rights than it had been in Florida post-Parkland.

"Florida is a swing state," said Calvin Jillson, a professor of political science at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. "You start with the understanding that Florida is a

purple state in which Democrats and Republicans are both competitive. Texas is a deep-red state, in which the Republican Party is in complete and total control. They don't feel that partisan electoral heat."

What played out instead was a reminder, as happened after 26 people were killed in a church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Tex., in November, that major gun violence often does not produce a backlash against guns. The differences in how the issue has played out in Texas and Florida illustrate just how hard it can be to establish a consensus on gun issues in America. For gun control advocates, what works in one part of the country does not work in others, even down to the vocabulary used. Some pro-gun Texans question the phrase "gun violence" and avoid using it, saying it is as arbitrary as talking about knife violence.

"People like to say on Facebook, 'Oh, you shouldn't be able to buy a gun,'" Ms. Bracknell told reporters at the church on Sunday, two days after police said a 17-year-old student used a shotgun and handgun, apparently belonging to his father, to kill 10 people, including a substitute teacher, Glenda Ann Perkins, whom Ms. Bracknell had known for years. "That kid was 17. He's not able to buy a gun anyway. It's not like a gun-law issue. This kid is obviously mentally unstable and he knew that there were flaws in the school system to get into the rooms."

The differences between the fallout from the Florida and the Texas shootings begins with the communities where they occurred.

In Florida, parents and students put emotional and public political pressure on lawmakers, and legislators responded just three weeks after the Parkland massacre. The Republican governor of Florida, Rick Scott, signed into law several measures, including raising the minimum age and adding a waiting period to purchase a gun. In Texas, there is no widespread vocal pressure and activism from the families and students themselves. Many Santa Fe students' views on guns track Ms. Bracknell's.

Hours after the shooting on Friday at a prayer vigil, Madilyn Williams, an 18-year-old senior, tearfully told Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, how she and a friend had fled their astronomy class and rushed to a gas station when the shooting started.

While some students from Parkland had angrily confronted their pro-gun elected representatives after their school was shot up, Ms. Williams quietly told a nodding Mr. Cruz that she wanted her teachers to be armed. It was a refrain in the candlelit park that night: Stricter gun control laws would not have prevented the shooting, several students said. But they believed that arming qualified teachers could have.

"If one of the teachers had a gun, we would have been a lot better off," Ms. Williams said in an interview.

Sid Miller, the state's Republican agriculture commissioner and a former rodeo roping champion, said he wanted to apply "a little cowboy logic" to the gun debate. While Texas may be receptive to certain measures, such as strengthening security in schools, Mr. Miller said, officials will continue to resist other policies championed by national gun control advocates.

"At this stage, any stricter gun control laws passing in Texas, that's just not going to happen," said Mr. Miller, a rancher who has a state-issued handgun license and whose combative social media commentary has outraged Democrats. "You can't protect yourself by taking guns away from the good people."

There are signs of gun control support in Santa Fe. Students held a small post-Parkland march in February. On Sunday outside the school, near where Mr. Abbott laid flowers in memory of the victims, one handwritten sign read, "More peace and love and less guns in this world."

Tyler Cruz, 18, a senior, said he would support any gun control movement that arises at his school now, but he knows his classmates will be divided. "Our community is really pro-gun here," Mr. Cruz said. "I'm pro-gun, but I'm not. I get the Second Amendment, but I just believe it's gotten too far with all this happening."

Mr. Cruz has drawn support from the shooting survivors in Parkland and has been messaging with four of them on Twitter.

Republican leaders in Texas, including Mr. Abbott and Mr. Cruz, have been criticized by Democrats for failing to act in response to the Santa Fe shooting, accusations they dispute. Instead, they and gun advocates nationally talk about a need to act — but not by restricting guns.

Since the shooting, gun rights advocates have called for arming teachers, redesigning school buildings and promoting safer gun storage at home to keep firearms out of the hands of children and teenagers.

Mr. Abbott has proposed holding round-table discussions, saying he wanted to work on laws that will protect Second Amendment rights while making schools safer. Oliver North, the incoming president of the National Rifle Association, Sunday on Fox News blamed mass shootings on violent movies and overuse of psychiatric drugs like Ritalin.

The Republican lieutenant governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, has called for reducing the number of entrances and exits at schools. On the CNN program "State of the Union," Mr. Patrick on Sunday also called on parents to strictly control their guns to keep them out of the hands of children, but he stopped short of calling for specific legislation mandating that.

The gun debate here touches on one of the central divides that shapes politics in Texas: the largely Democratic urban areas versus more conservative rural and suburban ones. Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, for example, has

bitterly denounced inaction on gun issues, and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner called on Sunday for new gun control measures and metal detectors in schools.

Santa Fe is a largely rural town in a part of southeast Texas that is home to oil refineries and working-class Republicans who own guns and routinely hunt. The town is only about 40 miles southeast of downtown Houston, but it is closer in its political and social culture to Southern-tinged East Texas. At least a handful of Confederate flags fly around town, on trucks, porches and businesses.

Polling shows the state's voters are more split on guns than popular culture might indicate. According to an October poll by the University of Texas and The Texas Tribune, more than half of the registered voters surveyed said gun control laws should be stricter. Only 13 percent said the laws should be less strict than they are now, and 31 percent would prefer to leave current gun laws unchanged.

But, for now, the pro-gun forces are firmly in control, and deeply conservative voices are not hard to find.

As Mr. Patrick greeted parishioners at Arcadia First Baptist Church on Sunday morning, he got an enthusiastic greeting from Robert Ross, 69, who has lived in Santa Fe all his life and has a nephew who once played football with the gunman. Mr. Ross said he believed the solution to school violence was not gun control, but faith. He blamed the shooting on what he called a cultural decay exemplified by legal abortion, gay marriage and the separation of church and state.

"We wonder why this is happening," he said. "Satan's right there. He's always putting his foot in everything."

Obama Administration Figures Propose Nationwide School Boycott To Push For Gun Control

By Valerie Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

A pair of Obama administration figures, including former Education Secretary Arne Duncan, has proposed that parents hold their children out of school until gun-control legislation is approved.

Mr. Duncan retweeted Friday a post from Peter Cunningham, who served as the Department of Education assistant secretary for communications and outreach during President Obama's first term, calling for a classroom boycott.

"This is brilliant and tragically necessary," said Mr. Duncan. "What if no children went to school until gun laws changed to keep them safe? My family is all in if we can do this at scale. Parents, will you please join us?"

This is brilliant, and tragically necessary.

What if no children went to school until gun laws changed to keep them safe?

My family is all in if we can do this at scale.

The idea was spurred by Friday's mass shooting at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas, which left 10 dead.

Mr. Cunningham, now the executive director of Education Post, followed up Saturday with an article proposing that parents keep their kids out of school on Sept. 4 until Congress passed "background checks for all gun purchases, a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines, and funding for gun research."

The message drew enthusiastic responses from several education figures, including KIPP NYC superintendent Jim Manly and Teach for All CEO Wendy Kopp.

Others said that such a boycott would hurt working-class families and strengthen conservative critics of the public schools.

That's brilliant! Then we could push for school choice and non-government solutions to educating children. But in the meantime.. let's think about this on a security level, instead of a political one. Securing schools is possible without restricting the liberties of others. — Bill Brown (@Billb2212) May 20, 2018

Sadly, this would suit the GOP enablers just fine. They want the public schools destroyed. Allowing these random murders is one way of getting what they're after—a stupid general populace, easy to manipulate and exploit. — Lee in Iowa (@Lee_in_Iowa) May 20, 2018

Before joining the Obama administration, Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Duncan both worked for the Chicago Public Schools.

Democrat Mark Warner: No 'Single Piece Of Legislation' Would Have Stopped Texas School Shooting

By Bradford Richardson

Washington Times, May 20, 2018

Sen. Mark Warner says there isn't one piece of legislation that would have prevented the school shooting Friday in Santa Fe, Texas.

"I don't think there's a single piece of legislation, but there's a series of actions," Mr. Warner said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." "Are there things we can do that would improve the safety of our schools? Absolutely."

The Virginia Democrat advocated better mental health counselling for troubled teenagers, ensuring parents store their firearms more carefully and "reasonable and logical restraints on gun ownership."

He acknowledged that the alleged Santa Fe shooter did not use a "military-style weapon," but said controls on such weapons may prevent similar tragedies in the future.

"Might not have affected this tragedy, but potentially others," Mr. Warner said. "The fact that we should—and this was not a case where there was an assault-style weapon, but the fact that we're the only industrial nation in the world that

allows these military-style assault weapons to populate throughout our whole society."

Mr. Warner said the "epidemic" of school shootings "seems to have gotten much worse in the last 10 years."

But research shows that violence in schools has been declining for decades, along with the overall U.S. crime rate, and nearly four times as many students were killed in schools in the early 1990s as today.

Ten students were killed and 13 injured Friday when Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, allegedly opened fire on his classmates at Santa Fe High School in Texas.

Mr. Warner implored his fellow members of Congress to take action on guns.

"But please for those folks that I work with in the Congress, take a moment and let your position evolve," he said. "I mean, there are ways that we can put reasonable restraints without dramatically interfering with people's Second Amendment rights."

Sabika Sheikh Embraced U.S. Culture. One Of Its Darkest Elements — A Mass Shooting — Killed Her.

By Todd C. Frankel, Tim Craig And Brittney Martin

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

STAFFORD, TEX. — The funeral was about to begin, the first of 10 for the victims of the Santa Fe High School mass shooting, and the body of Sabika Sheikh was waiting at the mosque.

Sabika, 17, dreamed of being a diplomat, of working to empower women. A Muslim exchange student from Karachi, Pakistan, she had come to the United States through a State Department-funded study program, excited to leave behind the dangers posed by extremists at home to experience a country that represented all that was possible.

That's what her host family remembered about her, that there seemed so little for her to fear here in Southeast Texas. And then a gunman opened fire at her school, in her classroom.

Now, Sabika was about to be on her way home, 20 days early. A Pakistani Embassy official had urged the medical examiner to work quickly so Sabika's family could bury her properly, a world away. A plane would leave with her body later this night. But first, the funeral.

Outside the mosque here, long before hundreds of people gathered to mourn, two men wondered what had become of America, their adopted homeland.

"I'm aghast," said Abdul Khatri, 60. "People come here because they are told there is peace here. You have the right to be protected here. It's why I came. But to have this happen not in India or Pakistan, but here? We have gotten off track. And it's been going on too long."

"Too long," the other man lamented. "I agree. Too long. But what will we do?"

The grieving in the Houston area on Sunday stretched from this mosque to the many churches near Santa Fe High School, the public search for answers to an unspeakable crime briefly suspended to make room for mourning. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) attended morning prayers at a Baptist church just down the road from the high school. The Saltgrass Cowboy Church held its regular Sunday morning service. Other churches welcomed their regular flocks, plus those newly compelled to visit.

It was striking that the first funeral was at a mosque, for a student who had barely gotten to experience American culture and ended up being consumed by one of its most divisive issues — the epidemic of school shootings.

"You imagine what it's like for her parents — all their hopes and dreams wrapped up in this child," said Farha Ahmed, an attorney from nearby Sugarland, drawn to attend Sabika's funeral. "And the next time they will see her, she'll be in a casket."

The mourners poured into the Masjid Sabireen mosque in this small town about 35 miles from Santa Fe, removing their shoes before stepping inside. Several students from Santa Fe High made the trip. So did Houston's mayor and two members of Congress. The mayor of tiny Stafford sat down and hurriedly pulled out his phone.

"Can you please make sure all flags in town are flown at [half-staff]," Mayor Leonard Scarcella said into his phone. "Tell him it's urgent."

Sabika's host family from Santa Fe arrived, six children in tow, the mother covering her blond hair with the red prayer shawl she'd received as a Mother's Day gift from Sabika.

Earlier at Arcadia First Baptist Church of Santa Fe, with Abbott in attendance, pastor Jerl Watkins tried to comfort the members of his congregation by telling them that prayer and acceptance of Christian values are the things that will heal this community. But he also pointed to the seeds of what he saw as a broader problem.

"It seems to me, since the 1960s in this country, we've begun to think technology and other things can replace our God, and we've taken God out of the schools, and social media has taken togetherness out of the family," Watkins said to about 200 parishioners, moving on to arguments over violence and abortion. "Many of these video games and movies our children are exposed to on a daily basis is all about thrill and killing and destruction. We've slaughtered millions of unborn children for the sake of convenience, and we twisted the sanctity of morality."

Before the service, which included honoring the congregation's nine graduating seniors, Abbott greeted parishioners in the vestibule. "I'm here to comfort my fellow Texans," he said.

Several parishioners told Abbott they were glad he's not rushing to implement new laws or restrictions on firearms after the shooting, during which a 17-year-old student allegedly gunned down eight students and two teachers with a shotgun and a pistol that police said belonged to his father.

"It's not a gun issue — it's a door issue," said Monica Barcknell, an 18-year-old senior, who like many people in this town think the shooting could have been prevented had the school had stricter entrance and exit policies.

Just 30 miles away, at the mosque, the issue of guns was discussed differently.

"We need to pass laws that restrict guns and other weapons of mass killing," said Javed Malik, the mosque's director, speaking during the funeral.

"And after the funeral prayers, what are we going to do to make sure this doesn't happen again?" said Sheikh Syed, the imam.

Authorities said Sunday that they are continuing to investigate the attack, which they said appeared to be intended to kill as many students and teachers as possible.

Abbott said the suspect in Friday's school shooting was armed with "several different types of explosive devices," including molotov cocktails and devices that use carbon dioxide to explode.

"He had some he threw into the classroom and some, as I understand it, were found in his home," Abbott said after he visited the high school. "So it's clear he wanted to try to use explosive devices, but he did not put them together in a way that they did explode. . . . But it shows this killer was intent on trying to inflict horrific damage on these kids, and my hope is he gets swift Texas justice."

Galveston County District Attorney Jack Roady, who will be prosecuting Dimitrios Pagourtzis on charges of capital murder and aggravated assault of a police officer, said federal prosecutors also might file charges after the FBI completes its investigation.

"We have a lot information and there is a lot of investigation still to be done," Roady said.

Roady declined to comment on whether authorities have uncovered a motive and said neither the victim autopsy reports nor other evidence would be released before a trial. Authorities have said there were no obvious red flags ahead of the attack.

Roady said Texas law allows for the death penalty in capital murder cases, but he said he will not seek death for Pagourtzis because he is a minor; the Supreme Court has ruled that minors are not eligible to face capital punishment.

"If the death penalty were on the table within the punishment range, I believe that we would be seeking it in this case," Roady said. "But the law is the law."

Sabika's funeral on Sunday was brief. The casket was carried into the overflowing mosque, and everyone stood up. Minutes later, the service was over. And Fuad Cochinalwa,

president of the Islamic Center of Greater Houston, quietly worked to move the casket outside to a waiting hearse. Several people argued that he should wait until all the speeches and memorials were over. But Cochinwala was insistent. The casket needed to be removed now so it could be taken to the airport.

"I need to get her home," he explained. "That's my job."

The consul general of Pakistan in Houston spoke of "shared grief." Houston's mayor noted that Sabika had achieved her dream of being a diplomat by pulling together two countries. And Sabika's host father recalled how his family had fasted along with Sabika during Ramadan. He thanked her for teaching him about love, "because when people love each other, these kinds of things don't happen."

More speeches were to come. But Sabika's body was gone.

The Turkish Airlines plane carrying her casket was scheduled to depart Houston at 8 p.m. It would travel thousands of miles and make a brief stop in Istanbul. It was scheduled to land in Karachi at 4:30 a.m. Tuesday, local time.

Sabika's family would be waiting.

Craig and Martin reported from Santa Fe, Tex.

Donald Trump Nominees Delayed By More Than Partisan Or Democrats' 'Obstruction'

By John Fritze

USA Today, May 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — When President Trump talks about the hundreds of vacancies scattered across his administration he's clear about where he places the blame: "Obstructionist" Democrats, he says at rallies and on Twitter, are slow walking his picks.

But a review by USA TODAY of the president's most-delayed appointments, including some who have been waiting for nearly a year, finds a more nuanced explanation that involves timing, concerns about an agency's direction and, sometimes, opposition from Republicans.

Trump's appointment to head the Central Intelligence Agency's office of inspector general has faced questions from Republicans. A proposed ambassador has languished over bipartisan inertia. A nominee to the Department of Health and Human Services was waylaid as lawmakers focused instead on the president's tax overhaul.

Trump has ratcheted up pressure on the Senate, and Republicans are considering a more aggressive schedule to get caught up on lingering nominations for hundreds of mid-level jobs that run the day-to-day operations at federal agencies.

"Waiting for approval of almost 300 nominations, worst in history," Trump tweeted recently. "Democrats are doing everything possible to obstruct, all they know how to do."

Trump has a point: The Senate has taken more time to clear his nominees than those of his recent predecessors — 85 days on average compared with 67 days for President Barack Obama, according to the non-partisan Partnership for Public Service.

Just more than 420 Trump appointees are confirmed compared with 652 at this point in George W. Bush's presidency.

But experts also note the White House got a slow start, and has yet to announce candidates for hundreds of other positions.

"Some of it is partisanship, some of it isn't," said Max Stier, president of the Partnership for Public Service, who believes far too many political appointments require Senate approval.

"Some of it is Republicans who don't like what they see, and want to negotiate something out of it," Stier said. Republican concerns

While Trump's pick to lead the CIA, Gina Haspel, won confirmation last week, another agency nominee has been stalled for months. Christopher Sharpley was named in September as the CIA's inspector general but was ensnared in a controversy over whistle-blower protections.

In Sharpley's case, it is opposition from Republicans — not Democrats — that is most notable. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, co-signed a letter last year citing investigations into whether Sharpley punished whistle-blowers. During a hearing last fall, Sharpley said he wasn't aware of the probes.

Grassley questioned that testimony, writing that investigators had sought to speak with Sharpley for months, and that they at one point visited his office to review documents.

"It's pretty clear he was misrepresenting his knowledge of the reprisal complaints against him," said John Tye of Whistleblower Aid, a Washington-based group that represents two former CIA employees who filed complaints against Sharpley.

A CIA spokesman did not respond directly to questions about those concerns but said officials are working with the Senate Intelligence Committee "toward a successful confirmation." Sharpley is serving in the job as the "acting" head of the office. Agency record

Stephen Vaden was among the first Trump allies to land at the Department of Agriculture last year, part of the "beachhead" team charged with helping the new administration get its hands around the 84,000-plus employee bureaucracy.

But his nomination to be the department's top lawyer, which was sent to Capitol Hill in September, has stalled for nearly nine months. Almost a dozen others nominated for Agriculture posts have since breezed past Vaden on their way to unanimous confirmation.

Public opposition has come from Democrats and centers on two issues: The reassignment of senior career staff at USDA and Vaden's prior legal work on a voter registration law in North Carolina that a federal court struck down for targeting African-American voters with "almost surgical precision."

Vaden, a Tennessee native, has Democratic opposition but also Democratic support. Three Democrats supported him in committee.

"If it was just Democrats then it would seem Republicans would have already approved him," said Jeff Streiffer with an American Federation of Government Employees local union that represents lawyers in the office.

Vaden has previously said his work on the voter registration law was assigned to him by superiors. A statement from the Department of Agriculture described him as a "keen legal mind" and said that farmers, ranchers and foresters "will be well served by his counsel." Timing is key

Trump tapped Lynn Johnson in June as assistant secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services, where she would oversee a budget of \$58 billion. Her delay appears to be a victim of timing more than partisanship.

Johnson, who runs a county public assistance office in Colorado, was referred to the Senate Finance Committee just as it was gearing up to write Trump's sweeping tax overhaul, which the president signed months later.

That's a common problem for Congress and any White House, said David Lewis, a political scientist at Vanderbilt University. And it underscores the need for to move nominations early in a new presidential term, he said.

"They just were slow out of the gate," Lewis said of the early days of the Trump administration. "If you don't hit the window right after the inauguration then the Senate moves on to other business."

Johnson also faces Democratic resistance. Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on Finance, warned in a hearing that her nomination "isn't going forward with my support" unless Health and Human Services answered questions about a delay implementing an effort to better track foster care. Who you know

Edward "Sonny" Masso, a retired rear admiral, served as a junior officer with former Trump strategist Steve Bannon in the Navy. His nomination to be the U.S. ambassador to Estonia arrived in early September — days after Bannon exited the White House in a spectacularly public blowup.

Masso, whose father emigrated from Estonia after World War II, never received a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Neither Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., the chairman who would schedule that hearing, nor the top Democrat on the committee, Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey, responded to questions about what happened to Masso's nomination.

The uncertainty comes at a time when Estonia and other Baltic States have occasionally struggled to interpret Trump's more aggressive posture toward NATO, and his occasionally inconsistent rhetoric on Russian aggression in the region.

Neither Democratic nor Republican senators have publicly criticized Masso. Two sources with knowledge of the process said a bipartisan inertia set in on the nomination following Bannon's departure. The ambassadorship is currently filled by a career diplomat, and experts said it would be unusual to yank him from the job to make room for a political appointee.

A State Department spokeswoman referred questions to the White House, which did not respond to questions about Masso. Controversial office

When Winslow Sargeant was nominated by President Barack Obama to be the chief counsel for advocacy at the Small Business Administration in 2009 the path to confirmation was anything but direct. It took the Senate more than two years to confirm him for the job.

And so Sargeant said he's not at all surprised Trump's nominee for the post, David Tryon, is also confronting delay.

Tryon, an attorney, was nominated in October to lead an office that has long been controversial regardless of who's in the White House. The position was created to be an independent advocate for small business, and can weigh in on federal regulations from any agency if they have an impact on small companies. That alone makes the office a target for opposition.

Todd McCracken, president of the Washington-based National Small Business Association, speculated that Tryon's delay is partly due to partisanship and partly because of "concern in some quarters on the Democratic side with the office itself."

Five of nine Democrats on the Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship voted against Tryon. An aide to Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., said she opposed him because most of his career appeared to be focused on large companies.

But Sargeant said there is an institutional roadblock for the office that has little to do with politics: Because it is set up to be independent of the White House, its nominees often don't get much support from senior administration officials.

"You feel like you're on an island by yourself," Sargeant said. "That's true whether you're a Democrat or a Republican."

Schumer: Deadly 'Super Pills' Are Making Opioid Epidemic Even Worse

By Linda Massarella

New York Post, May 20, 2018

More than a million high-dose opioid "super pills" are prescribed by doctors every month, creating an opioid epidemic that's "on steroids," Sen. Chuck Schumer said Sunday.

A single super pill has at least 80 morphine equivalents, a dosage the senator said is rarely needed in pain management. The OxyContin brand of super pills has the dosage power of 24 Vicodin tablets in one swallow.

"Gaining access to these drugs often begins with the stroke of a doctor's pen, but can lead down a dark and dangerous path that either fuels opioid addiction or results in overdose death," he said.

Schumer said CDC data shows the number one way that people improperly acquire opioids is for free from a friend or relative.

"It terrifies me that a 16-year-old could find a bottle of these super pills in a medicine cabinet and not realize how dangerous they are," he said.

Is Kevin McCarthy Trying To Push Paul Ryan Out Of The Speaker's Chair?

Weekly Standard, May 20, 2018

Top Republicans in Congress and the White House have in recent days entertained a plan to push House Speaker Paul Ryan out of his post over the summer, in an effort to clear the way for his presumed successor, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, to assume the speakership.

A source involved in the conversations and who has discussed the idea with President Donald Trump told THE WEEKLY STANDARD that Trump believes there is merit to the plan, but has not formed a final position. McCarthy has been weighing the effort alongside a small group of trusted advisers, considering the pros and cons of forcing Ryan's hand, and debating the best time to launch the effort. As of last week he had not spoken to Ryan about the idea, the source said.

Proponents say that the benefits are twofold. It would trigger a vote to replace Ryan, giving McCarthy an opening to become speaker of the House — that is, if he can avoid crashing and burning on takeoff like he did in 2015. But it would also force Democrats to cast votes for — or against — Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a favorite target of Republican campaign strategists, to be speaker. That vote could then be used against vulnerable Democrats during the height of campaign season, the source said.

Under the plan, Ryan would step down from his post as speaker prematurely but would remain a member of Congress until his term ends in January 2019. The prospect of Ryan's right-hand man amping up the pressure for him to leave sooner portends a significant shift in the power dynamics of the chamber. A spokesperson for Ryan declined to comment. McCarthy responded in a statement provided to

TWS: "Completely untrue. Paul has my total support. Together we are completely focused on our agenda and traveling the country to take our unified message and action to the voters in November."

Ryan has pushed back strongly on suggestions that he might depart early, instead pledging to serve as the chamber's leader for the remainder of his term. Allies of Ryan argue his intent to remain speaker doesn't come from a thirst for power, especially because it is a job he didn't ask for in the first place. Instead, Ryan says that holding off on leadership elections will allow the GOP to focus on campaign season rather than engaging in a bloody intra-party feud.

"I've talked to a lot of members who think it is in our best interest for me to stay here and run through the tape," Ryan said at a press conference last month.

The push for a shortened leadership race began quietly in the days after Ryan announced he would retire. Some members, like close McCarthy ally Tom Graves, asserted that a lame-duck speaker would have diminished power within the GOP conference and on the campaign trail. "We would have more success if there's no ambiguity as to what the leadership structure might look like," Graves told Politico.

But Friday appeared to have been a breaking point for the forces eager to see Ryan step down sooner, after GOP leaders were unable to navigate the demands of the hard-line conservative Freedom Caucus, resulting in the embarrassing failure of the Farm Bill. In the aftermath of the bill's demise on the House floor, a "senior Republican source" lashed out at Ryan in a Politico story about the legislative failure. The "senior Republican source" argued that "this is the problem when you have a lame duck speaker who announces he's leaving eight months in advance."

"He can make calls to members to urge them to vote for something, but who will care?" the individual added.

A remarkably similar quote later appeared in The Hill, also attributed to a senior GOP source. "If you have somebody who's going to be stepping down eight months in advance, a lot of people are not going to care what you have to say," the source said.

McCarthy's first run for speaker failed for a number of reasons. He drew Republican criticism during the race when he made comments implying the Benghazi investigation was politically-motivated. "Everybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi special committee, a select committee. What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping," McCarthy said on Fox News. "Why? Because she's untrustable. But no one would have known any of that had happened, had we not fought."

Those remarks were condemned immediately by Republicans involved in the investigation. "That was not the reason we started. We started because there were four dead Americans and we didn't have answers," Jason Chaffetz, who challenged McCarthy for the speakership, said at the time.

On top of his Benghazi gaffe, McCarthy struggled to win the support of conservative members, some of whom were reluctant to support him amid concerns that he would not represent enough of a change from the tactics of former speaker John Boehner.

Three years later, Ryan argues that McCarthy has accumulated more political experience than he had the first time around. "I think we all believe that Kevin is the right person," Ryan said during an interview with NBC after he announced his retirement.

But conflict between McCarthy and Ryan has been growing.

The two hold vastly different opinions about how to approach the DACA debate in the House. While Ryan has repeatedly said he would like to find a solution to the issue — recently saying he wants to vote on an immigration measure before the election — McCarthy is far more skeptical about the political benefits of doing so. During a Republican conference meeting last week, he told members that "If you want to depress [GOP voter] intensity, this is the No. 1 way to do it," Politico's Rachael Bade reported.

That argument highlights the difference in their leadership styles, with Ryan more policy-focused and McCarthy more interested in politics. Right now, the speaker's race is more of a shadow campaign to win favor from the conference — "This is the time of the year where I get all the area codes I've never seen before on my phone," Kentucky Republican Thomas Massie quipped — but members are having heated conversations about who they want to lead the party.

Other contenders for the role include Freedom Caucus founding member Jim Jordan, and Majority Whip Steve Scalise. Scalise has said he would not run against McCarthy, but members say it is likely he would run if McCarthy proves unable to garner enough support for the position.

Trump Weighs Coup Against Paul Ryan: Report

By Steven Nelson

Washington Examiner, May 20, 2018

President Trump has been briefed on plans to force House Speaker Paul Ryan out of office this summer and is considering lending his support, according to a new report.

A source who discussed the idea with Trump told The Weekly Standard that the president "believes there is merit to the plan, but has not formed a final position."

The plan is to replace Ryan quickly with House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., in part to strengthen the power of the speaker's office after conservative lawmakers blocked a sweeping farm bill last week.

Ryan, a Wisconsin Republican, plans to step down from the leadership post in January when he retires from Congress.

McCarthy has not spoken with Ryan about the plan, according to the report, and he denied that he's considering supporting a coup, telling The Weekly Standard in a statement that the claim was "completely untrue" and that "Paul has my total support."

Although McCarthy is considered a front-runner, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, also is considering seeking the leadership position. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., was seen as a contender, but said in April he would not run against McCarthy.

McCarthy, who has courted a close relationship with Trump, abruptly dropped out of the 2014 speaker's race to replace Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, when faced with conservative opposition and rumors about a relationship with a fellow member of Congress.

Editor's note: The Washington Examiner and the Weekly Standard are owned by the same parent company, Clarity Media Group.

CBS News Nation Tracker Poll: Americans Give Trump Credit For Good Economy, Mixed Reviews On N.K.

By Anthony Salvanto, Jennifer De Pinto, Fred Backus
And Kabir Khanna

CBS News, May 20, 2018

Nearly two in three Americans think the nation's economy is in good shape, and most of them believe President's Trump's policies are at least somewhat responsible for that. More Republicans rate the economy positively than do Democrats.

As Congressional primaries continue and Americans look ahead six months to their midterm votes, President Donald Trump looks like a positive factor among Republicans, seven in 10 of whom say they'd prefer a candidate he backs — but the president's influence is limited to his own party. More Independents say they're less likely to support a candidate backed by President Trump.

Meanwhile on the Democratic side, Senator Bernie Sanders carries more positive influence with both Democratic voters and independents than does Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. More than half of Democrats say they'd be more likely to vote for a candidate endorsed by Sanders, while a majority of Democrats say a Pelosi endorsement wouldn't affect their vote. Nearly half of independents say knowing a candidate was backed by Pelosi would make them less likely to back that candidate themselves.

Given a list of many different types of candidates to choose from, Democrats tend to divide between preferring either a moderate or a progressive Democrat. Republicans,

meanwhile, strongly prefer a Congressional candidate who would be in line with Mr. Trump (75 percent) to a Republican who would act more independently from Mr. Trump (just 17 percent.)

Women candidates of both parties have been winning primaries of late, but there are partisan differences on what impact women might have. Most Democrats think Congress would work better if there were more women Representatives. Most Republicans and independents say Congress would remain the same.

This survey has followed the levels of Trump support and opposition over time. Today, buoyed by their feelings that the economy is at least somewhat good, the ranks of Mr. Trump's strongest backers have risen to 22% from 18% back in January. Many of these backers had previously adopted a wait-and-see approach, labeling themselves as more conditional in their support a few months ago. Supporters overall – both strong and conditional – together remain less than a majority, however, while the ranks of the strongest Trump opponents have remained steady.

Still, overall, a majority of Americans feel the President is looking out a lot for the wealthy and big business, and his own business interests – more so than they feel he is looking out for them. However, there are big divides on this, as there have been throughout his Presidency: his core supporters are the most steadfast in saying that he is looking out for their interests, as well as those of the working and middle class overall.

People who are more conditional supporters are slightly more likely to say he's looking out a lot for business – including his own – more so than people like them. One of the biggest indicators of being a strong Trump supporter is that those backers feel he is looking out for people like them above big business, the wealthy, and his own business interests. And they give him much more credit for the economy than do others, including more conditional backers.

Most Republicans think Mr. Trump is keeping his campaign promises: 50 percent say he is keeping most of them, and another third say he's keeping some and hasn't gotten around to the others yet. The President's strongest backers are especially likely to say he's keeping most of the promises he made during the campaign.

Americans give Mr. Trump mixed marks on his approach to negotiations and deal making so far. More than half have not much or no confidence in his handling of issues with North Korea and Iran. A slim majority say his approach to China has been about right.

There are partisan divides on these measures. Two-thirds of Republicans say the President's negotiations have already been successful, and most express a lot or some confidence in his handling of North Korea and Iran. Democrats, on the other hand, call the President's negotiations and deal making unsuccessful.

Many Americans (47 percent) feel it's too soon to say whether a potential meeting between Mr. Trump and Kim Jong-Un would produce actual steps toward North Korea ending its nuclear program. But they are almost twice as likely to think that won't happen (35 percent) than think it will (18 percent). Republicans are more inclined than Democrats to think a meeting could lead to North Korea ending its nuclear program, but a majority of them think it's too soon to say.

Boom: Team Trump Cuts Nearly Twice As Many Regulations As Promised

By Paul Bedard

Washington Examiner, May 20, 2018

The Trump administration is showing no signs of slowing its slashing of Obama-era regulations, beating their plans to cut two for every new rule and saving more than double what was hoped for, according to a new report.

"The Trump administration is making substantial deregulatory progress," said a new report from American Action Forum.

"The administration is prioritizing deregulation, and it is set to double its goals of a two-for-one deregulatory-to-regulatory ratio and \$686.6 million in net savings," said the report from forum experts Dan Bosch, director of regulatory policy, and Dan Goldbeck, a senior analyst.

When he came to office, Trump promised to cut two regulations for every new one he imposed.

The duo said that the percentage is actually 3.75 to 1, an unprecedented reduction.

Trump believes that cutting regulations, while it receives few headlines, is one of his team's biggest accomplishments and a driver in the improving economy and investment in the United States.

The Labor Department and Health and Human Services currently lead the regulation cutting pack in the detailed report seen here.

The Trump Administration's Deregulatory Progress And Forecast

American Action Forum, May 17, 2018

Covered rulemakings in the Unified Agenda have a current deregulatory-to-regulatory ratio of 3.75 to 1, exceeding the Trump Administration's goal of 2-to-1.

Executive agencies have exceeded the Trump Administration's annualized savings target by \$517.4 million.

Looking forward, executive agencies are on target to double their annualized savings goal of \$686.6 million.

INTRODUCTION

In releasing the Spring 2018 Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions on May 9th, the Trump Administration stated that the agenda demonstrated its

"ongoing commitment to responsible regulatory reform and progress toward eliminating unnecessary regulatory burdens."

Indeed, the Trump Administration is making substantial deregulatory progress, as this initial review published by the American Action Forum notes – both in terms of the number of rulemakings and the estimated costs and savings included in published final rules.

While there are 2,226 active rulemakings currently underway at federal agencies, this study focuses on those rules that have received a designation under Executive Order (EO) 13,771. That order requires executive agencies to reduce regulatory burden and meet cost savings targets by using deregulatory actions to cancel out costs of new, significant regulatory actions.

According to the Unified Agenda, 499 regulations are designated as deregulatory while 133 are regulatory and significant enough to be covered by EO 13,771. The ratio of 3.75 to 1 exceeds the order's goal of 2 to 1. AGENCY BY AGENCY EO 13,771 RULEMAKINGS

The table below breaks down the 499 deregulatory rulemakings and 133 regulatory rulemakings by agency.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) tops the list of active deregulatory and regulatory actions, as it did in our review of the fall 2017 Unified Agenda. However, its totals did not remain static. The department increased its number of planned deregulatory actions by 27 and decreased its planned regulatory actions by 21.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) remained second in deregulatory and regulatory actions. It is planning seven more deregulatory actions than in the fall and one less regulatory action.

The Department of the Interior broke a tie for third with the Department of Agriculture by adding three new deregulatory actions. The Department of the Treasury plans the third-most regulatory actions.

To get a better sense of why the numbers for some agencies changed from the fall 2017 agenda, AAF analyzed the active actions of the DOT, since that agency had the most EO 13,771 actions. Forty of the active deregulatory actions in the new agenda were not listed as such in the fall. Of these, 31 appear in the Unified Agenda for the first time, five were on the long-term actions list, three were designated as regulatory actions previously, and one had no designation.

On the regulatory side of the ledger, three actions are new to the active list. Two were previously designated exempt from EO 13,771 under the "other" exemption and one was previously designated as not significant. Twenty-four actions that were planned in the fall 2017 agenda, however, no longer appear as active. Of these, 12 were reclassified from regulatory to the "other" category, three were reclassified to long-term actions, three were reclassified as deregulatory, three were reclassified as fully or partially

exempt from EO 13,771, two were completed, and one was reclassified as not significant. The likely reason for all these reclassifications is that further analysis, either by the agency or the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), produced some sort of divergent conclusion. AGENCY DEREGULATORY PROGRESS

While the fall 2017 Unified Agenda provided the regulatory budget framework for agencies during Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 (ending on September 30, 2018), the recent agenda merely updated the list on rulemakings currently underway.

To provide a look at how agencies are fairing at reaching their budget targets so far, this study analyzes the 41 final rules published in the Federal Register (through May 11) that were designated as regulatory or deregulatory under EO 13,771 and included estimated costs or cost savings. The results of this analysis appear in the table below. Agencies in red have not met their budgetary goal yet, while agencies in green have met or exceeded it.

Executive agencies have thus far exceeded their cumulative target by a substantial margin. OIRA set a goal of \$686.6 million in annualized savings. So far, executive agencies have exceeded this goal by 75 percent.

As the table shows, 13 agencies have already met or exceeded their savings target – some by a substantial margin. The Department of Labor currently has published the most savings, primarily due to a delay of the effective date of its Fiduciary Rule (\$291.1 million). HHS comes in a close second on savings from two Medicare rules totaling \$511.5 million. Had HHS not implemented a Medicare rule that cost \$296 million, however, it would be far ahead of all other agencies. DOT and the Department of Justice are currently third and fourth, respectively.

Nine agencies still have some work left to do. The three agencies with the largest shortfalls currently are in the top four of budgeted savings targets: Interior, Energy, and Defense. According to OIRA guidance, agencies that fail to meet their budget target in the current fiscal year must develop a plan to get into compliance, and explain why they failed to do so.

It is important to keep in mind that this analysis is just a snapshot of the present, and there is still plenty of time for agencies to publish rules with costs or savings. OIRA is nevertheless likely pleased with what has been accomplished so far. REGULATORY BUDGET PROJECTION

The analysis above reveals the progress agencies have made individually over the past year in implementing EO 13,771. The Unified Agenda, however, is still primarily a prospective document that lays out the administration's plans for the near future. To that end, it shows a continuing deregulatory push that could result in cost savings of double their stated goal for FY 2018.

The table below includes general findings for what has happened to-date in FY 2018 and what may happen in its final months. For the prospective part of this analysis, AAF examined Unified Agenda entries in the Final Rule stage with either "Economically Significant" or "Other Significant" designations that agencies expected to act upon by September 2018.

All "regulatory" cost figures below come from agency estimates of either that direct action or an earlier phase (such as a proposed rule) of that rulemaking. All "deregulatory" figures come from agency estimates of either that direct action or the estimated annual costs of the original regulatory action it targets. These calculations show some potential, quantified impact. Some of these figures (from either proposed versions or past regulations marked for change) may not be exactly the same after they wind through the regulatory process. Cost/Saving Totals may not match exactly due to rounding.

The most notable finding in this analysis is the potential net total of \$1.376 billion in projected savings. That amounts to almost exactly double the amount of the administration's goal of \$686.6 million in annualized savings. The relevant agencies arrive at this figure largely on the heels of the progress they've already made. Although the next few months are projected to be net-deregulatory, they are not nearly as prodigious as those to-date. The sample included in the table above, however, merely includes those rules with a quantifiable estimate attached. As apparent earlier, there are many rules outside this sample that agencies expect to include in FY 2018's regulatory budget, and further information regarding their effects may be forthcoming as they reach the final rule stage. MAJOR RULE SCHEDULE

The following tables provide a chronological sample of major rules that have some attributable cost or cost-saving estimate in the current edition of the Unified Agenda. Rulemakings designated as deregulatory measures are italicized. EO 13,771 measures an agency's "tally" in annual costs or cost savings, and since annual cost estimates help mitigate some of the inconsistencies in measuring past impacts against future ones, the tables below include such estimates in their annualized form (to the extent possible).

As with the projections above, we included an either the relevant proposed rulemaking's estimate or (in the case of some deregulatory actions) costs of the original regulation it addresses. Therefore, it includes the same caveat that some of the individual estimates may shift as these actions become finalized. 1 The only quantified estimate provided in the proposed rule was for "regulatory familiarization" costs. However, DOL anticipates the final rule to be primarily deregulatory for the purposes of EO 13,771. CONCLUSION

The Unified Agenda's release usually comes and goes with little fanfare, but it is still an illuminating document for discerning an administration's regulatory – or deregulatory –

priorities. This update is now the third from the Trump Administration, and its rulemaking record is becoming more fully formed. The administration is prioritizing deregulation, and it is set to double its goals of a two-for-one deregulatory-to-regulatory ratio and \$686.6 million in net savings.

EPA's Pruitt, Praised For Effectiveness, Hits Bumps In His Rollback Campaign

By Juliet Eilperin And Brady Dennis

Washington Post, May 20, 2018

In March, as part of Scott Pruitt's aggressive campaign to roll back federal regulations, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed relaxing standards for storing potentially toxic waste produced by coal-burning power plants.

EPA officials cited a study indicating that forcing utilities to get rid of unlined coal ash ponds too quickly could strain the electrical grid in several regions of the country.

But when environmental advocates scrutinized the specifics, they discovered a problem: The evidence cited was not established scientific research. Instead, the agency was relying on a four-page document by the utility industry's trade association, the Edison Electric Institute, which has acknowledged that its conclusions were not "part of or a summary of a larger study."

Lisa Evans, a lawyer for the group Earthjustice, was among the advocates who seized on that omission, as well as on gaps in technical data and other evidence, to argue that the agency's action was ill-advised and legally flimsy.

"The record does not support the proposal," Evans said, noting that the Obama administration's 2015 requirement on coal ash drew on years of public input and peer-reviewed scientific studies. "I've never seen a rule like this, in terms of the thinness of the evidence."

The coal ash proposal is among the more than half-dozen major moves that the EPA has seen snagged by procedural and legal problems. The delays threaten to tarnish Pruitt's image as an effective warrior in President Trump's battle against federal regulations, a reputation that has so far saved the EPA administrator his job amid an array of investigations into ethical and management lapses.

Earlier this month, the White House Office of Management and Budget sent back a proposal to ease emissions restrictions for refurbished heavy-duty trucks and ordered the agency to analyze the proposal's economic impact. That move followed a separate OMB request in April that the EPA offer "some analysis" to show that it would actually yield environmental benefits.

The EPA's own science advisers have called for a review of the "adequacy" of research used not only to justify revoking the truck rule but to reverse fuel-efficiency standards for cars. And over the past year, courts have halted or reversed multiple Pruitt initiatives, in one case forcing the

EPA to restore limits on methane leaks from oil and gas operations after a federal appeals panel concluded that their suspension was illegal.

Jeffrey Holmstead, a partner at the law firm Bracewell LLP, who headed the EPA's air and radiation office under President George W. Bush, thinks it is "premature" to evaluate how durable Pruitt's reforms will be.

"Early on, before they really had their folks in place, they sent over a lot of rules that didn't have a lot of technical support," Holmstead said, adding that in recent months the Senate has confirmed numerous appointees who previously served at the EPA and so are more experienced in working with career staff. "A lot more work is getting done."

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said in a statement that the agency "has been vigorously carrying out President Trump's regulatory reform agenda, consistent with applicable laws and executive orders." He noted that last year alone, nearly 40 actions — "including 10 economically significant regulations" — completed their interagency review at the OMB.

But federal records and interviews reveal how much White House officials and staff in other agencies have questioned whether the EPA is meeting the legal requirements necessary to revise Obama-era actions.

The OMB recently posted a document with tracked changes highlighting an extensive rewrite of the agency's proposal to revoke stricter tailpipe emissions for cars and light trucks. Pruitt concluded that higher mileage targets for vehicles produced between model years 2022 and 2025 are "not appropriate" because automakers can't achieve them. Among the red-line changes was an added reference noting that some outside groups, including the Union for Concerned Scientists, believe that the thresholds can be met.

"The rules are coming in undercooked," said Amit Narang, regulatory policy advocate for the watchdog group Public Citizen.

The agency, for example, is drafting a "supplemental rule" to one proposed last year that would change federal oversight over more than half of the nation's water bodies. It already is being sued over its push to revoke the 2015 "Waters of the U.S." rule, which affects activities that could drain wetlands and intermittent streams. According to officials, the supplemental language would address White House concerns that the EPA needs to clarify what would actually take the place of the regulation once it is abolished.

Despite such missteps, both critics and supporters of Pruitt agree he has been effective in reshaping the agency through his executive powers. He issued directives changing what sort of data can be used to calculate air-quality standards throughout the country and which studies can factor into public health rules. He scrapped a two-decades-old policy requiring that once a power plant was deemed a

"major" polluter, it would always face the most stringent regulations, even if its emissions fell.

The administrator is not letting up, either. His agency's recent "unified agenda" signals an aggressive deregulatory push in the months ahead.

Holmstead points out that on significant actions, such as reevaluating vehicle fuel-efficiency standards or undoing the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, the EPA's final decisions matter far more than the initial ones.

"On the big rules, we still haven't seen the final rules, and that's where you see the record that has to justify things," he said.

Yet critics are looking to exploit the early procedural errors as they challenge Pruitt's efforts in court. More than 70 lawsuits have been filed against the EPA's regulatory actions, according to an analysis by the office of Sen. Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.). Of the six cases that have had a full court review, the agency has lost four and delayed arguments in one.

With the proposal on coal ash — intended to give states and utilities more latitude when disposing of the waste — opponents have seized on the fact that there's no study underpinning the EPA's position. The current requirement means that most coal ash ponds that pollute nearby groundwater or lie in unsafe areas must close within six months of contamination being detected.

Although the Edison Electric Institute document cited by the EPA draws from a 32-page report on summer electricity demand by the North American Electric Reliability Corp., that analysis does not speak to the issue of coal ash disposal.

Institute official James Roewer, who runs an industry coalition on coal ash, said in an email that the document "is not part of or a summary of a larger study; there isn't more detailed information that wasn't provided to EPA. It is simply a high-level review."

Last month, scores of people assembled in the ballroom of a Doubletree Hotel in Arlington, Va., to testify at a public hearing on the proposal. They represented a cross section of Americans — tribal members from Nevada and New Mexico, Girl Scouts from Illinois, a mother from Missouri, a doctor from Indiana. They described how nearby coal ash pits have affected the health of their communities and implored EPA officials not to change course.

"If anything, we should be here making the rules and regulations stronger, not weaker," said Rachael O'Reilly, 30, of Peoria, Ill., which she said lies downstream from two coal plants. "Why are we here moving backwards?"

HUD Drops Obama-Era Tool Aimed At Enforcing Fair Housing Law

Housing advocates accuse Trump administration of assaulting former President Obama's key policy

By Laura Kusisto

Wall Street Journal, May 18, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

U.S. Government Bonds Pay More Than Debt From Other Developed Nations

Higher yields reflect investors' struggle to reconcile expectations for faster U.S. growth with concerns about impact of deficits and inflation

By Daniel Kruger

Wall Street Journal, May 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Marlan, Andrew M.

From: CPIC
Sent: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 11:49 AM
To: Katz, Walter;Forde, Janel;Tate-Nadeau, Alicia;Caluris, Steven M.;Panepinto, Leo
Subject: Homeland Security Products 130318
Attachments: Homeland Security Products 130318.pdf

ALCON,

Attached is Homeland Security Information / Intelligence for 13 MAR 18

Chicago Police Department
Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) 312-745-5669, Fax 312-745-6927

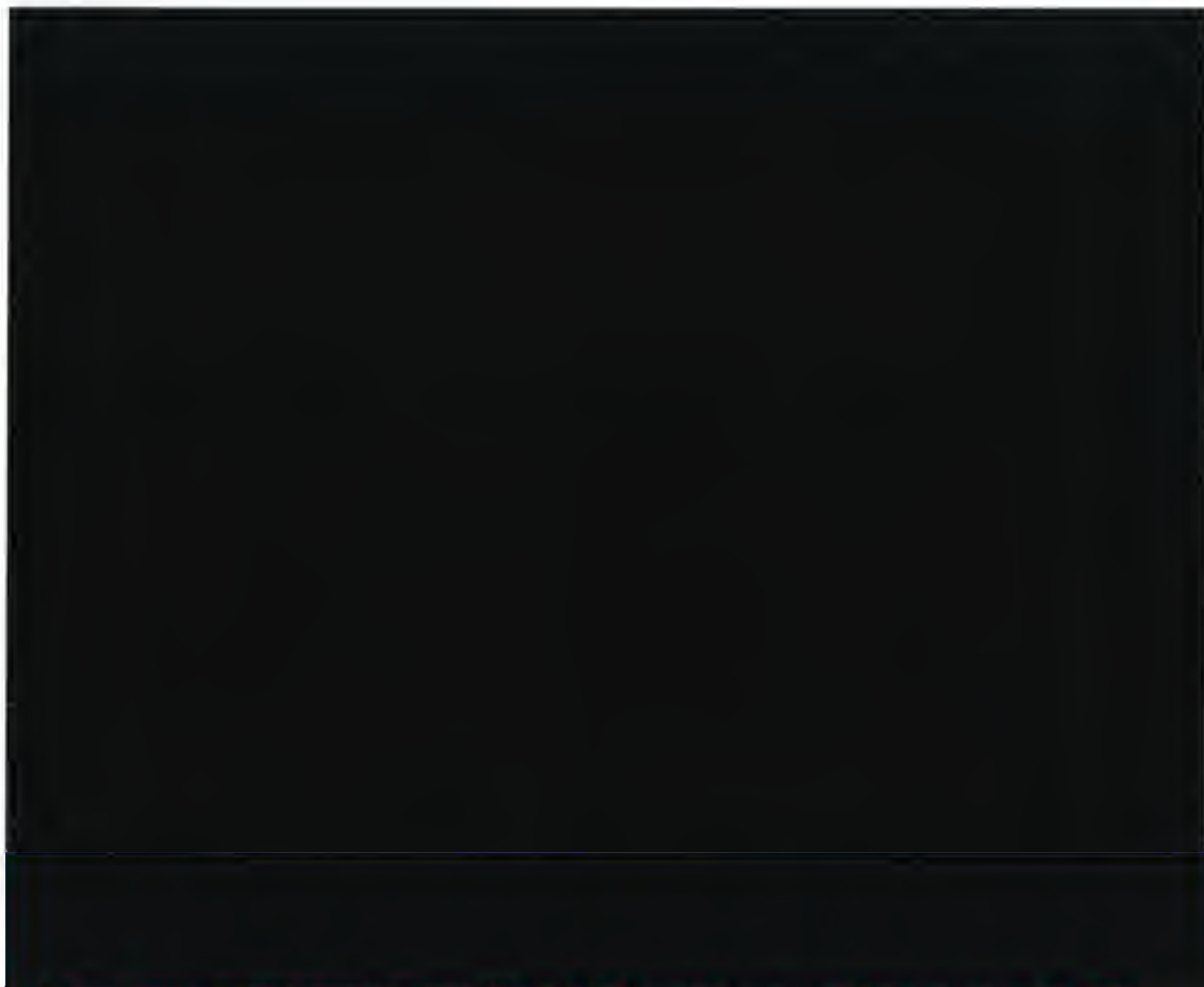
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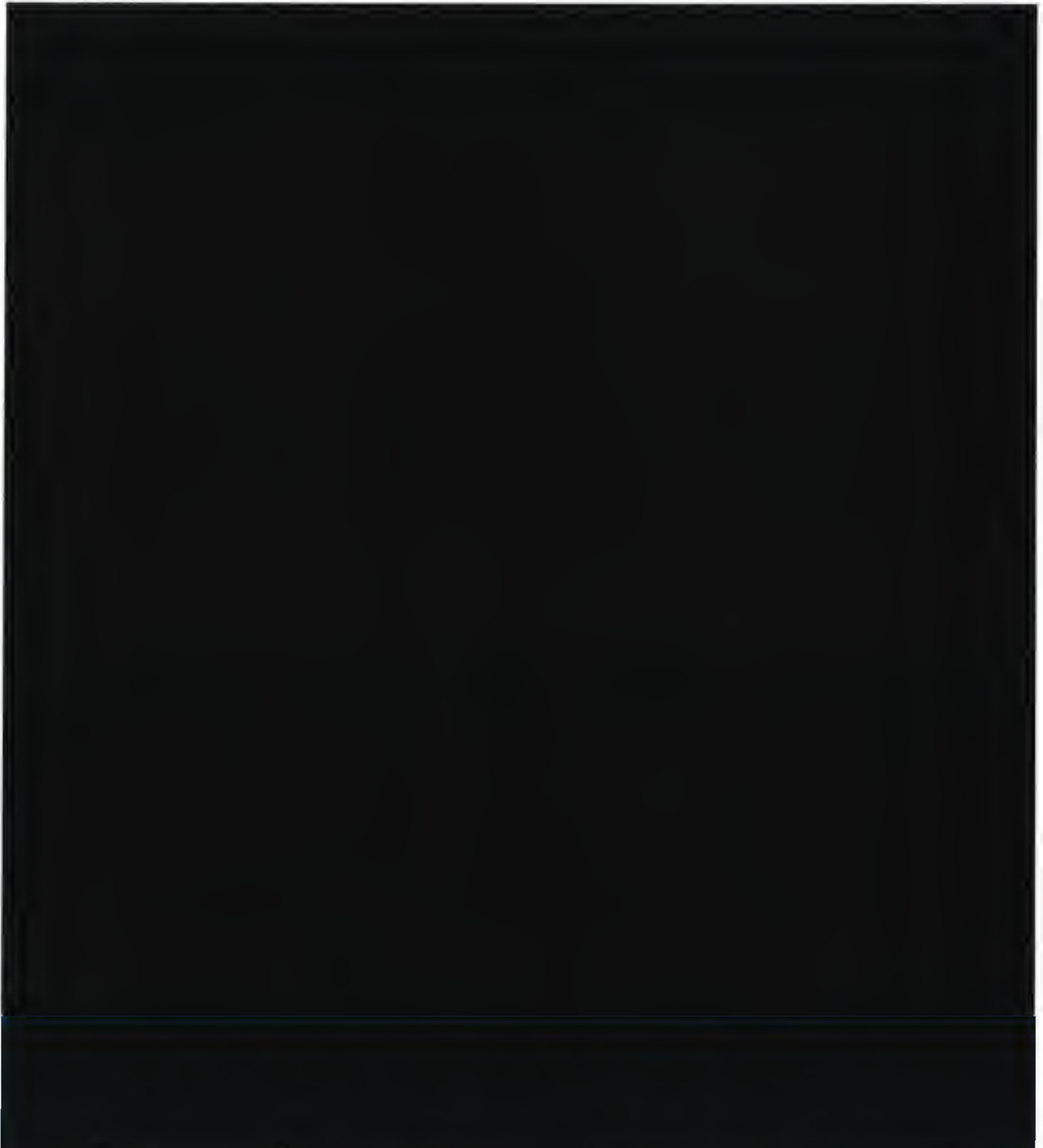
(U) CTS Horizon Report
13 March 2018



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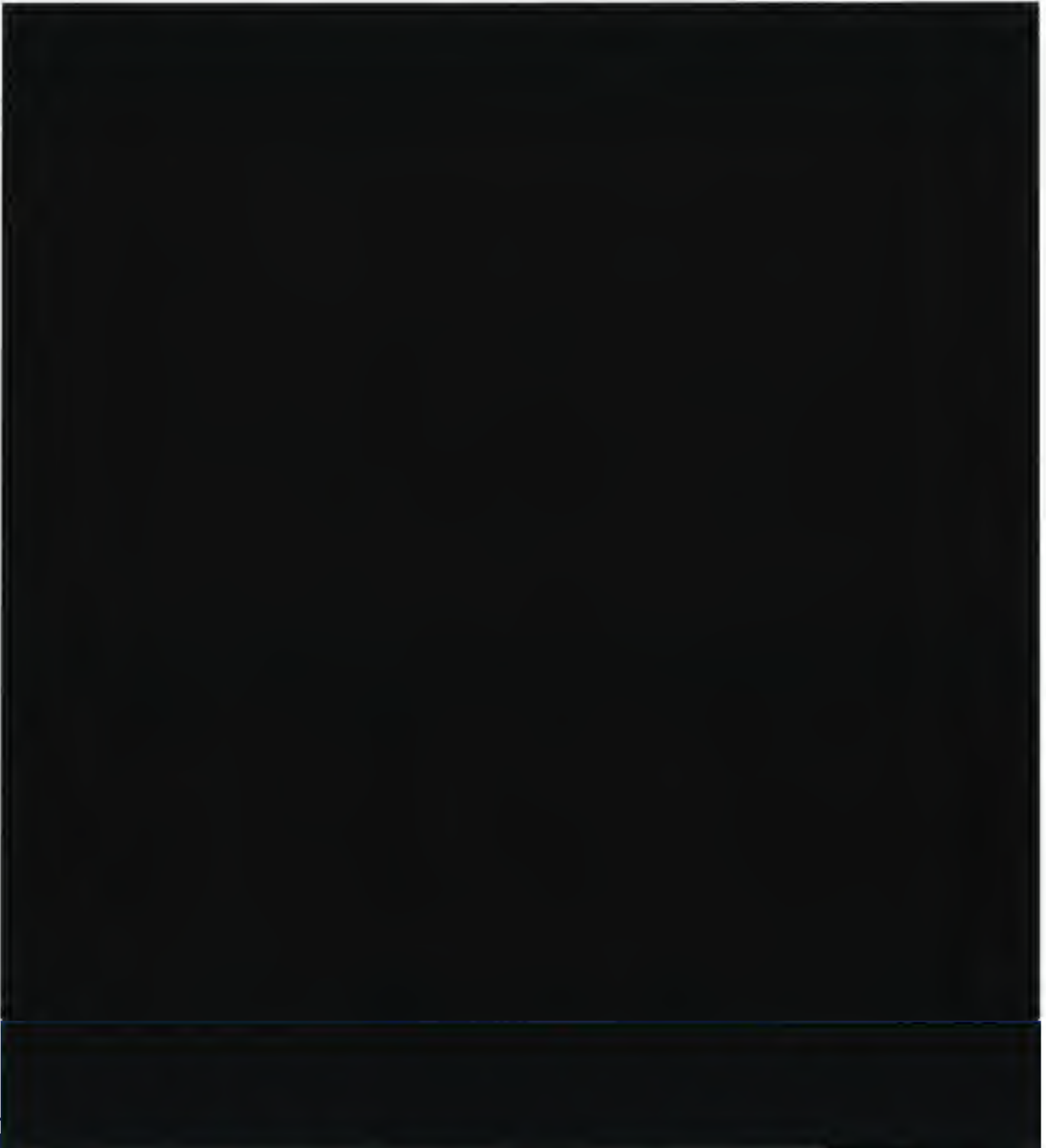
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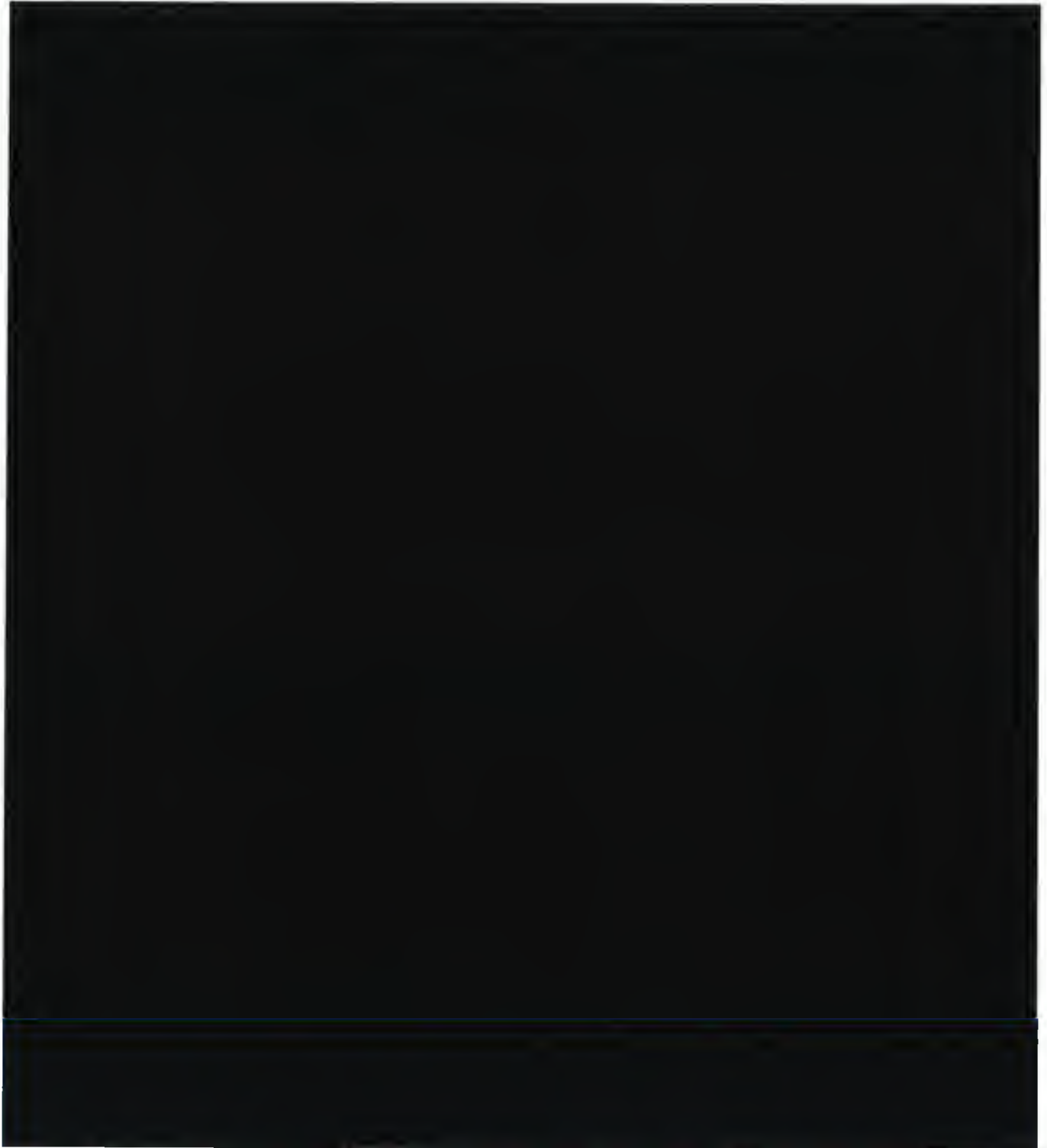
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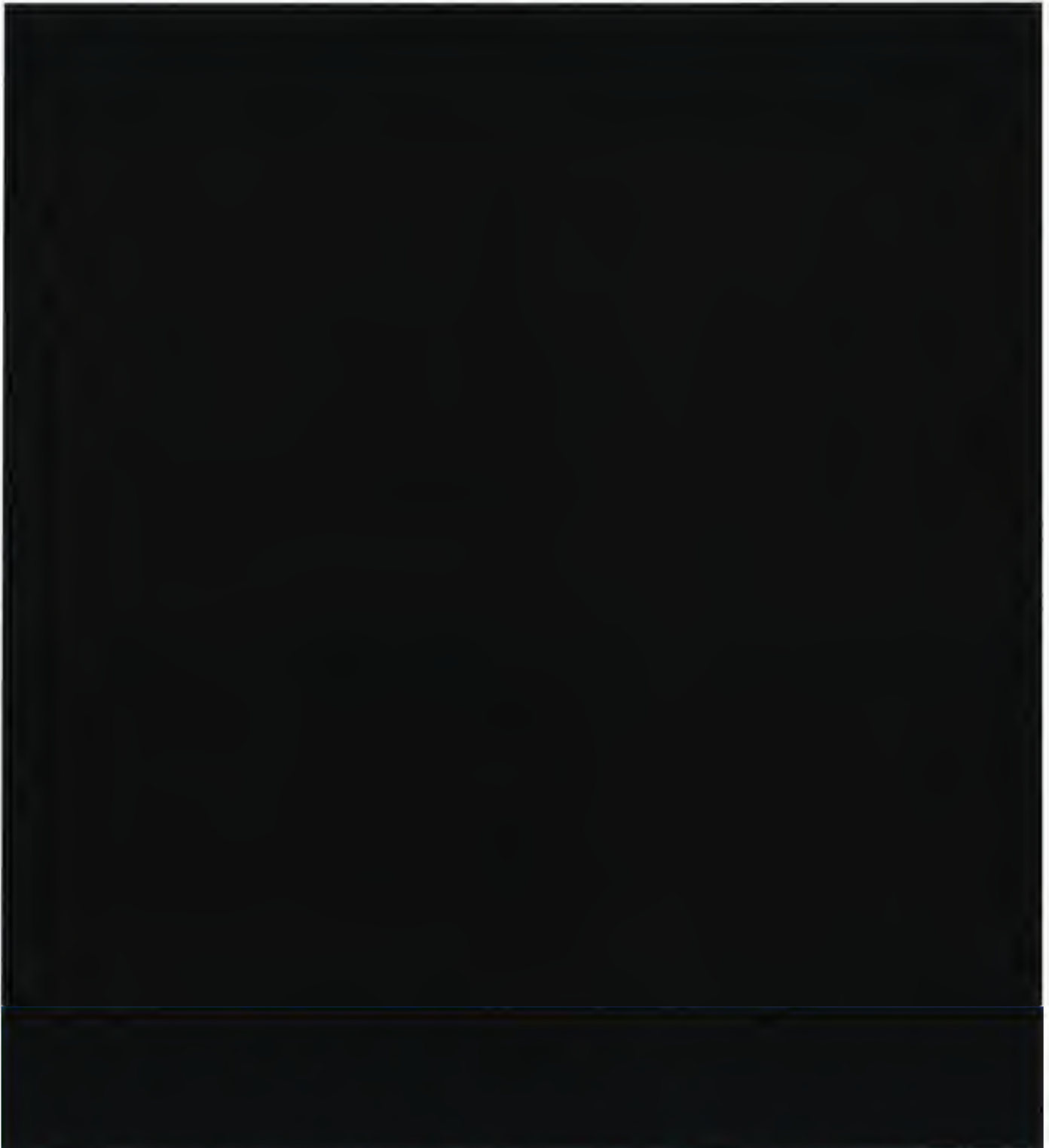
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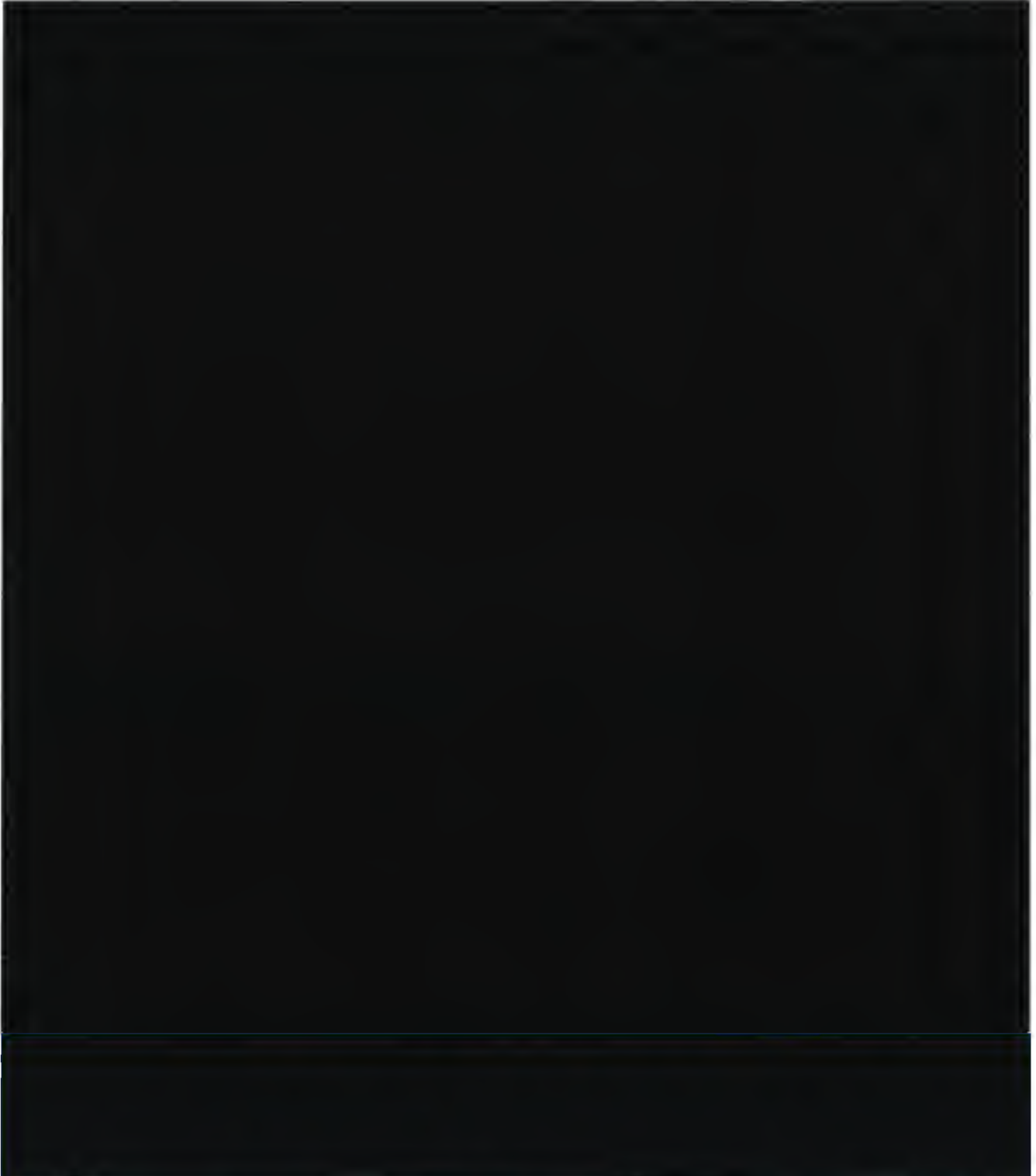
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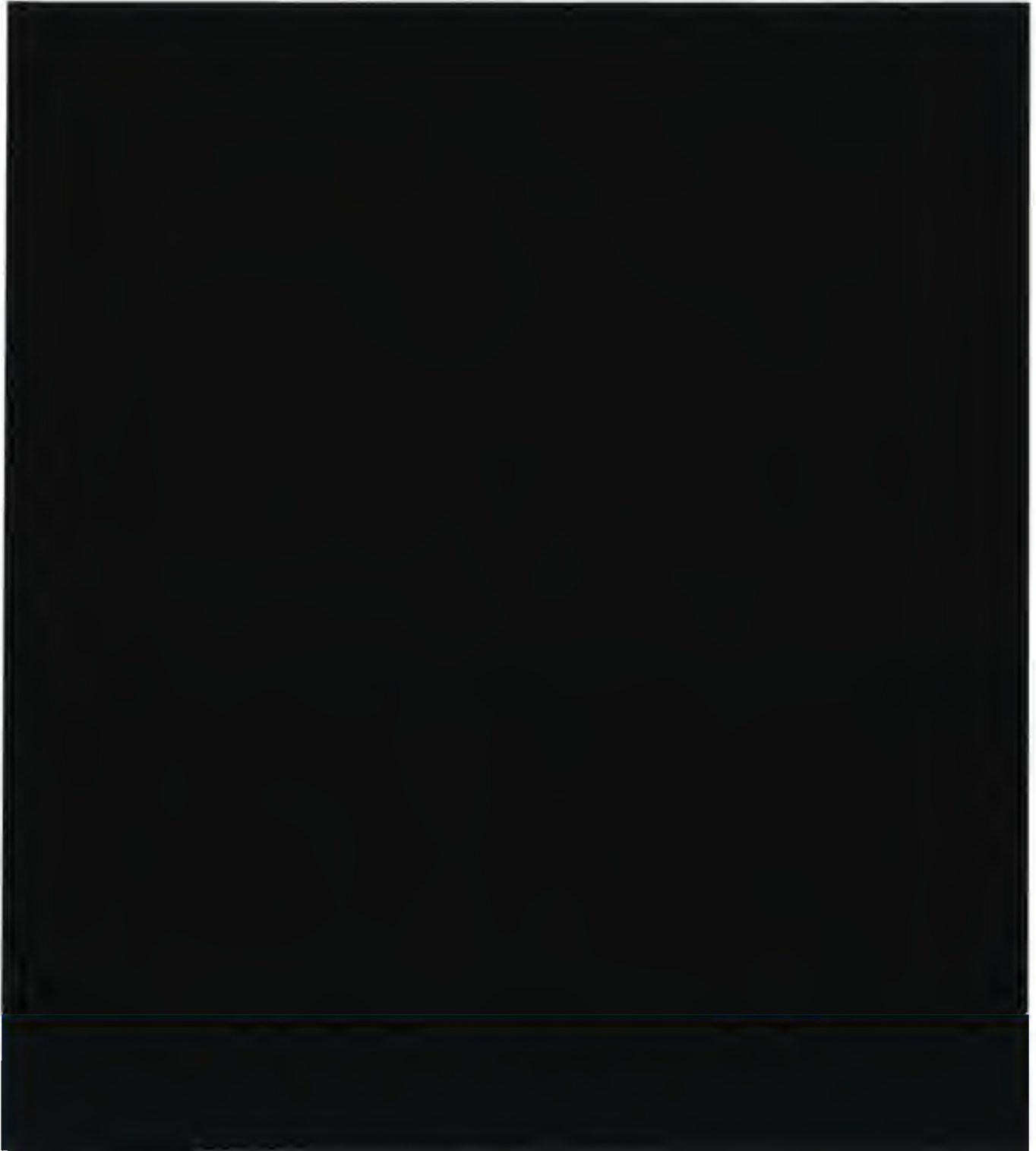
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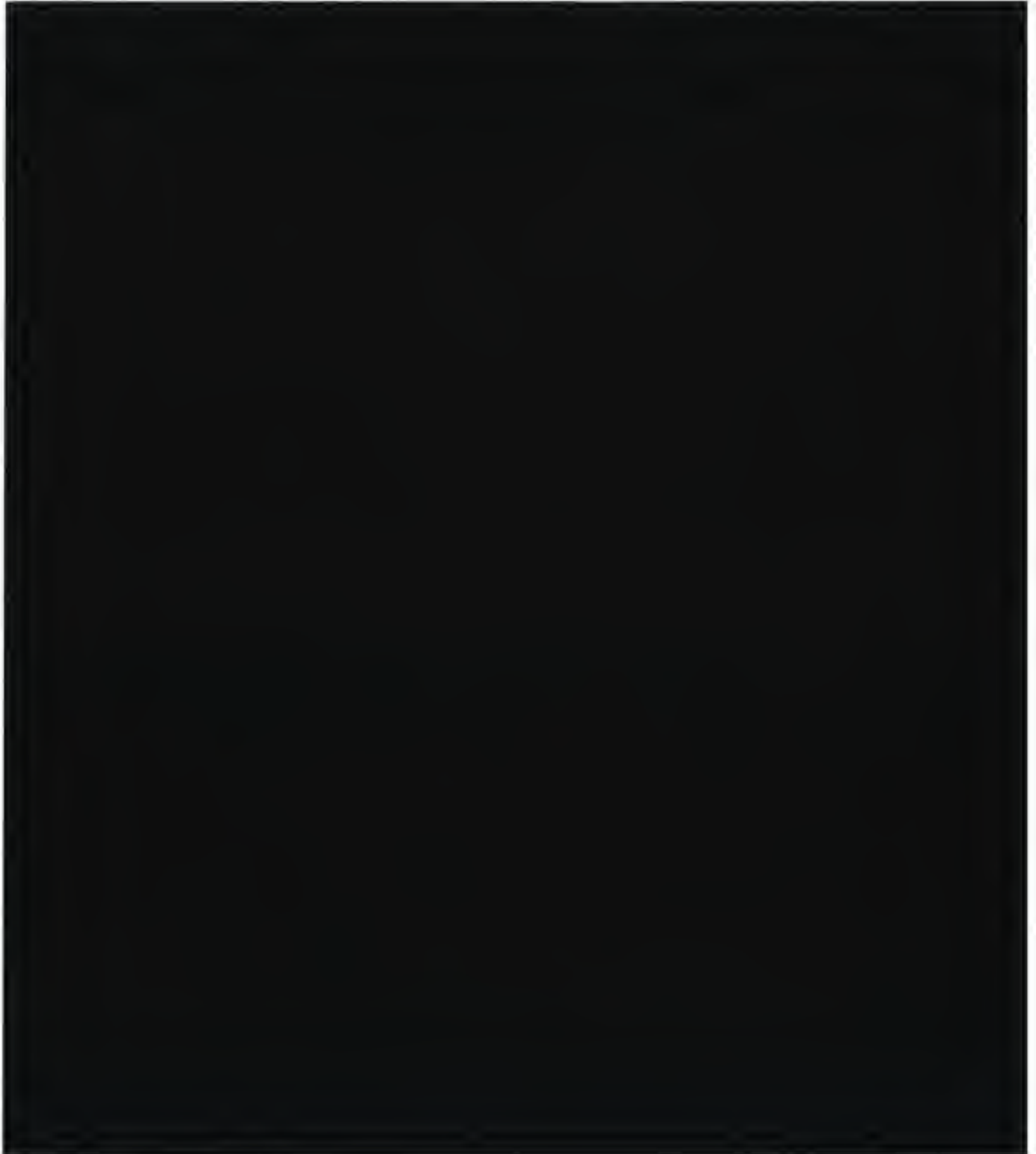
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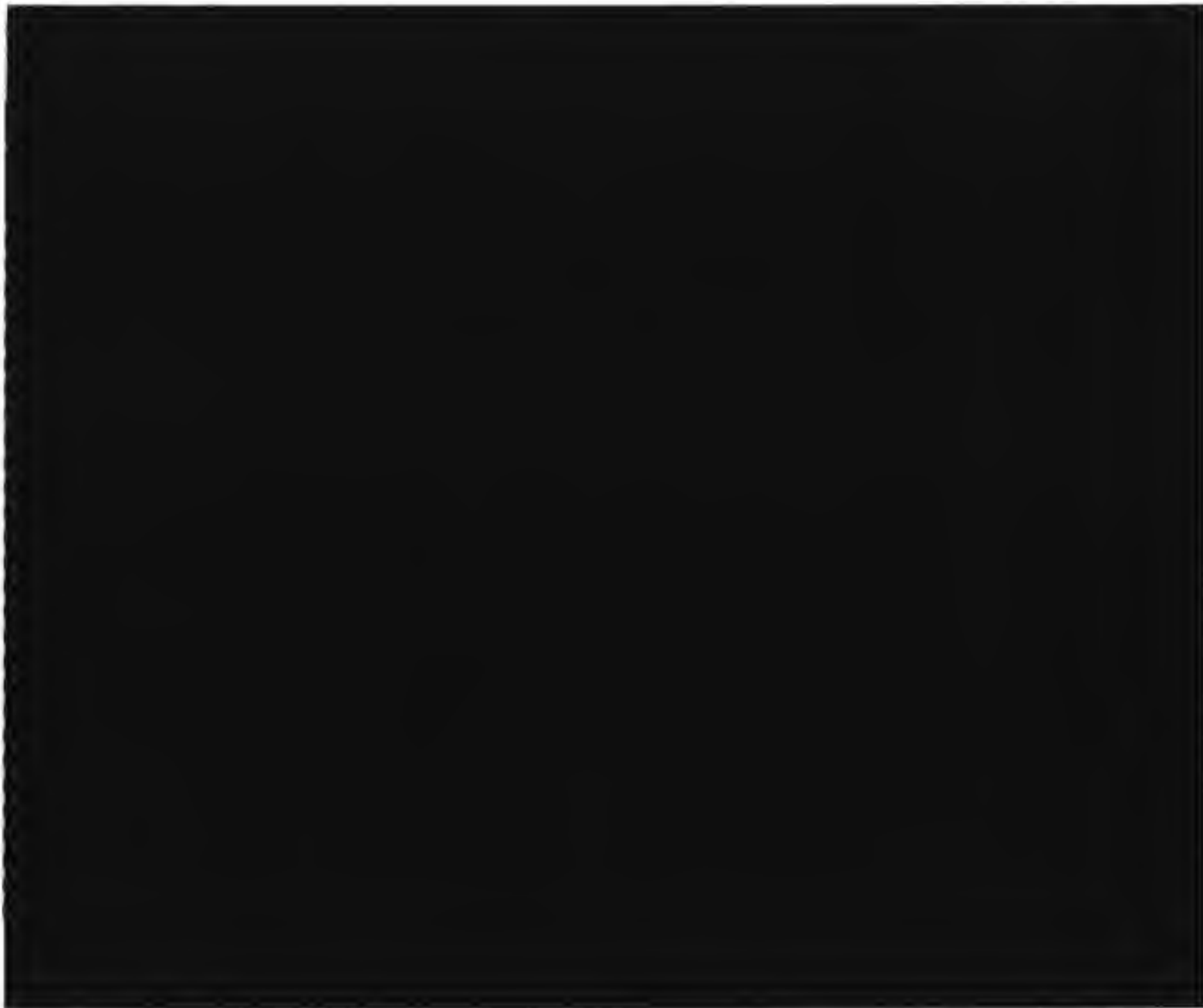
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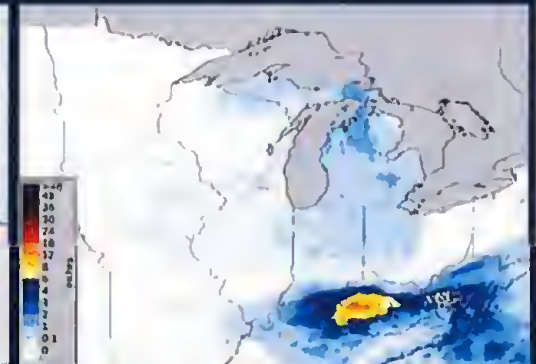


Morning Brief

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

FEMA
REGION V

SNOWFALL



Minnesota

Wisconsin

Michigan

Illinois

Indiana

Ohio

Nothing Significant to Report

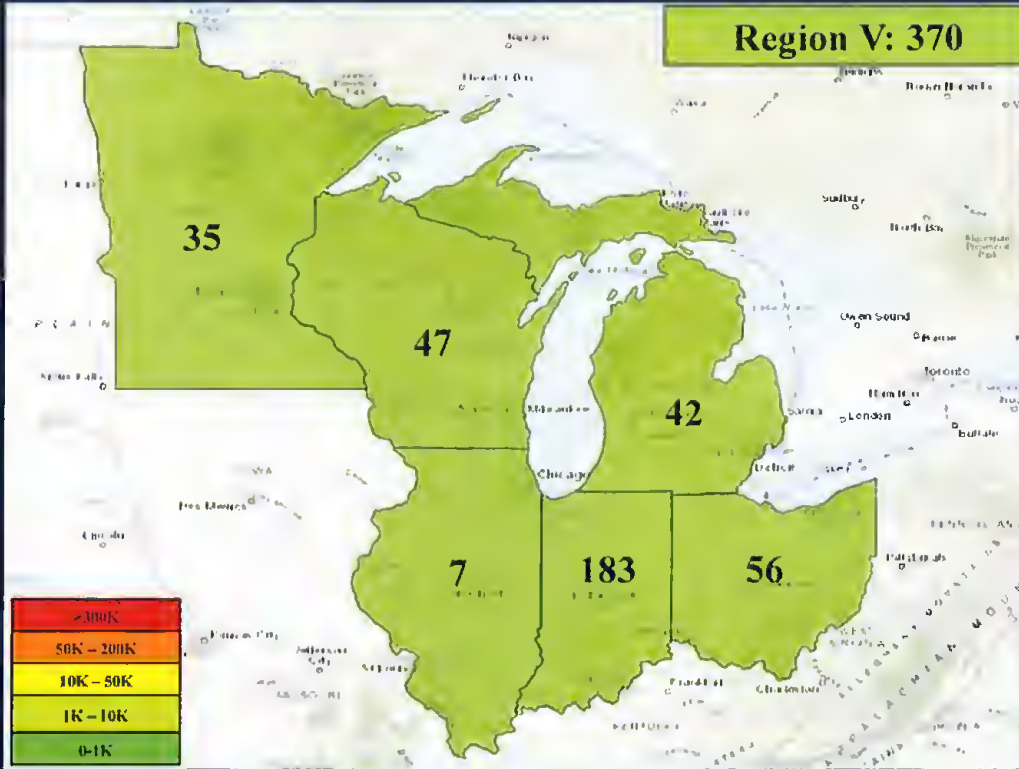
11 - HAIL

12 - WIND

13 - THUNDER

INFRASTRUCTURE STATUS

POWER OUTAGES



FEMA
REGION V

CONDITIONS & THREATS

| | AIRPORT STATUS | ROADWAY STATUS | NUCLEAR FACILITIES |
|----|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| IL | | | |
| IN | | northwest | |
| MN | | | |
| OH | | | |
| WI | | | |
| RV | | | |
| | EXCESSIVE | MASS FLOODING | GENERAL WVA |
| | SEVERE | FLOODING | SEVERE |
| | MODERATE | SNOW/ICE | ALERT |
| | LOW | DEBRIS | UNUSUAL EVENT |

| | GEOMAGNETIC STORMS | SOLAR RADIATION STORMS | RADIO BLACKOUTS |
|-------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| DAY 1 | | SI or GREATER | R1 - R2 |
| DAY 2 | G1 | | R3 - R5 |
| | G1 EXTREME | S1 EXTREME | R1 EXTREME |
| | G1 SEVERE | S1 SEVERE | R1 SEVERE |
| | G1 STRONG | S1 STRONG | R1 STRONG |
| | G1 MODERATE | S1 MODERATE | R1 MODERATE |
| | G1 MINOR | S1 MINOR | R1 MINOR |

REGION V READINESS

OPERATIONS STATUS

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| RRCC | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| RWC | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| PRIMARY IMAT | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| DCE | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| LNO | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| NTAS | NORMAL OPERATIONS |

STATE OPERATIONS STATUS

| | |
|-----------|-------------------|
| ILLINOIS | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| INDIANA | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| MICHIGAN | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| MINNESOTA | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| OHIO | NORMAL OPERATIONS |
| WISCONSIN | NORMAL OPERATIONS |



TRAINING & EXERCISES

TRAINING:

- Mar 12-15: PER-314 REP Exercise Evaluator Course (REEC); Indianapolis, IN
- Mar 13: FEMA Ethics Training; Chicago, IL
- Mar 14: Excel III (Advanced); Chicago, IL
- March 16: AWR-327 REP Exercise Controller Course (RECC); Indianapolis, IN
- March 20-22: MGT-453 REP Post-Plume Plan Review Course (RPPR); Benton Harbor, MI
- Mar 21-22: Closeout of Federal Grants; Chicago, IL

EXERCISES:

- Mar 13: Region V Power Outage Incident Annex (POIA) Seminar #2; Chicago, IL
- Apr 24: Palisades REP Ex; Van Buren Co, MI
- April 30-May 5: Eagle Rising National Logistics FSE; Wright Patterson AFB, OH
- May 14-18: WI Dark Sky FSE; Madison, WI, Chicago, IL
- May 31: Great Lakes Unplugged RRCC Functional Exercise; Chicago, IL

DISASTER DECLARATION STATUS

PDA SUMMARY:

| State | Event | Event Date | Type | Requested | Completed | Start/End |
|-------|------------------------|-----------------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| OH | Severe Storms/Flooding | Feb 14-25, 2018 | PA | 21 | 0 | 3/12/2018 - TBD |

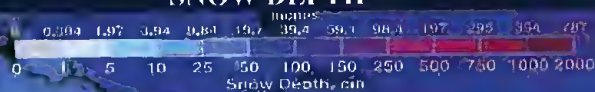
DECLARATION REQUESTS: None

DECLARATIONS: FEMA-4343-DR-WI. On October 07, 2017 the President approved a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Wisconsin as a result of severe storms, mudslides, flooding, and straight-line winds during the period of July 19-23. It provides Public Assistance for 11 counties (Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Iowa, Jackson, La Crosse, Lafayette, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon) and Hazard Mitigation statewide. FCO is Janet Odesheo.

SNOW ANALYSIS



SNOW DEPTH



SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT CHANGE



Update

Illinois Indiana

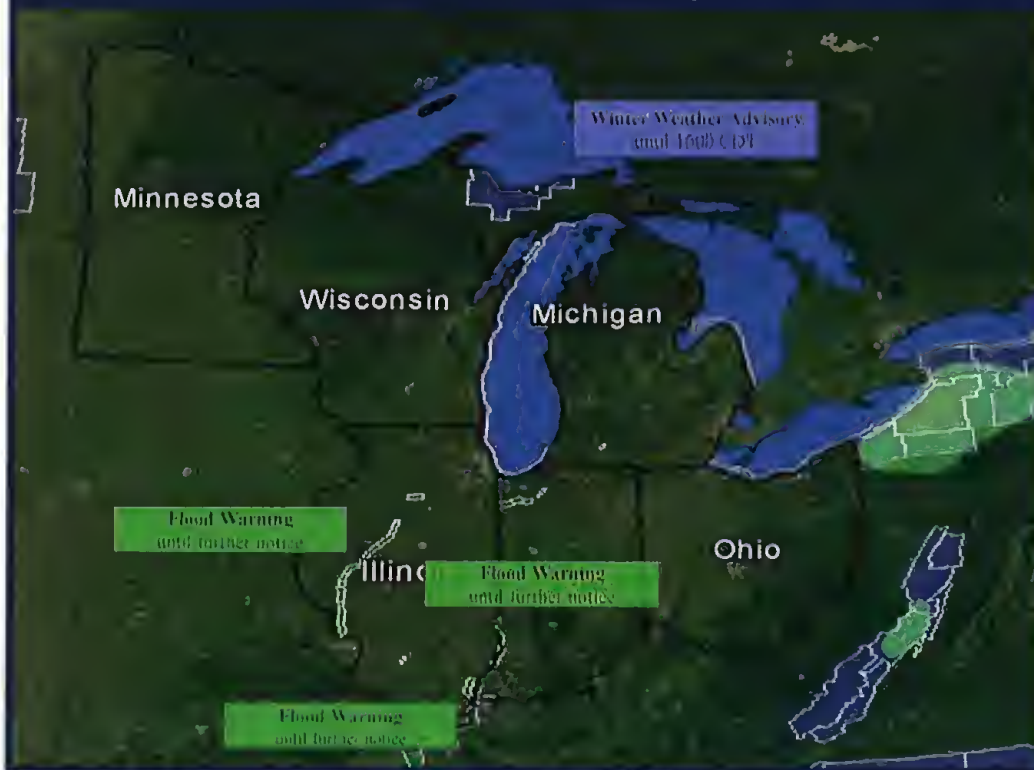
CURRENT WEATHER

WATCHES & WARNINGS

**FEMA
REGION V**



RADAR



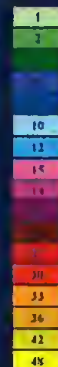
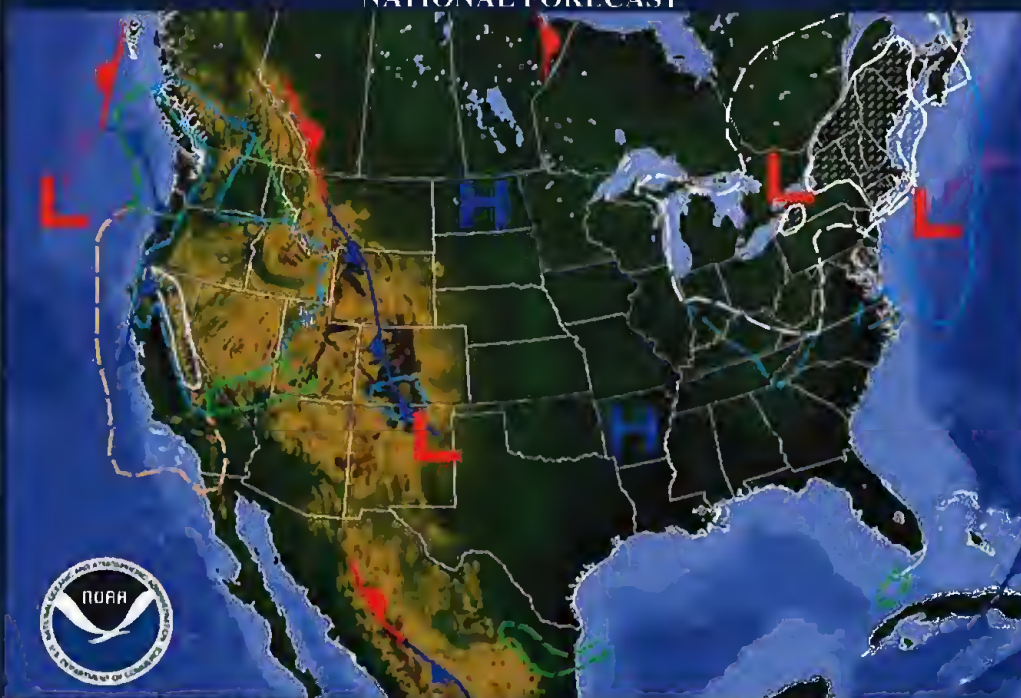
MAX TEMPERATURE



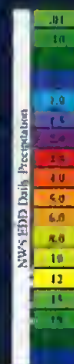
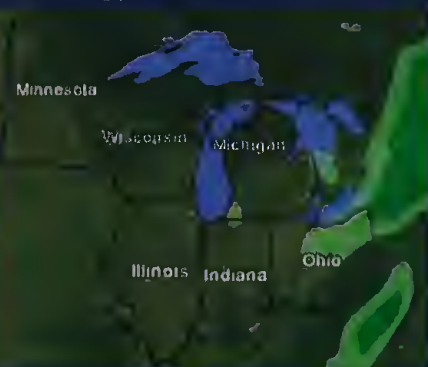
DAY 1 FORECAST

NATIONAL FORECAST

FEMA
REGION V



SNOWFALL



RAINFALL



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Mar 10, 2016, Issued 4:58 AM EDT
 DDC/NOA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
 Prepared by Mcraynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
 Rain and T'storms
 Rain and Snow
 Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)
Severe T'storms Possible (hatched)
Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)
Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)



DAY 2 & 3 REGIONAL FORECAST



DAY 2 SNOWFALL



DAY 2 RAINFALL



DAY 3 SNOWFALL



DAY 3 RAINFALL

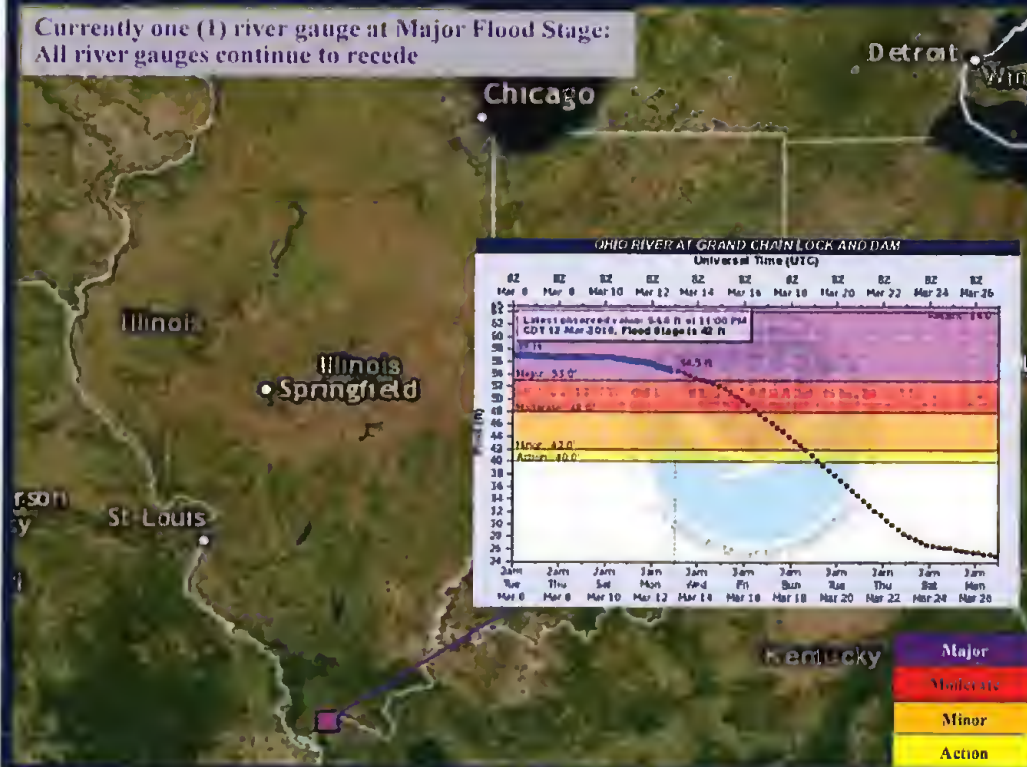


HYDROLOGIC OUTLOOK

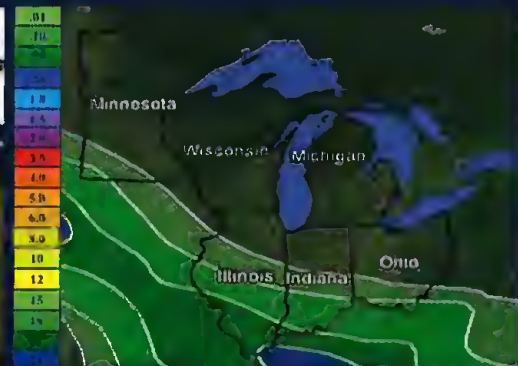


RIVER OBSERVATIONS (3 GAUGES AT OR FORECAST MAJOR)

Currently one (1) river gauge at Major Flood Stage:
All river gauges continue to recede



DAY 4-5 PRECIPITATION

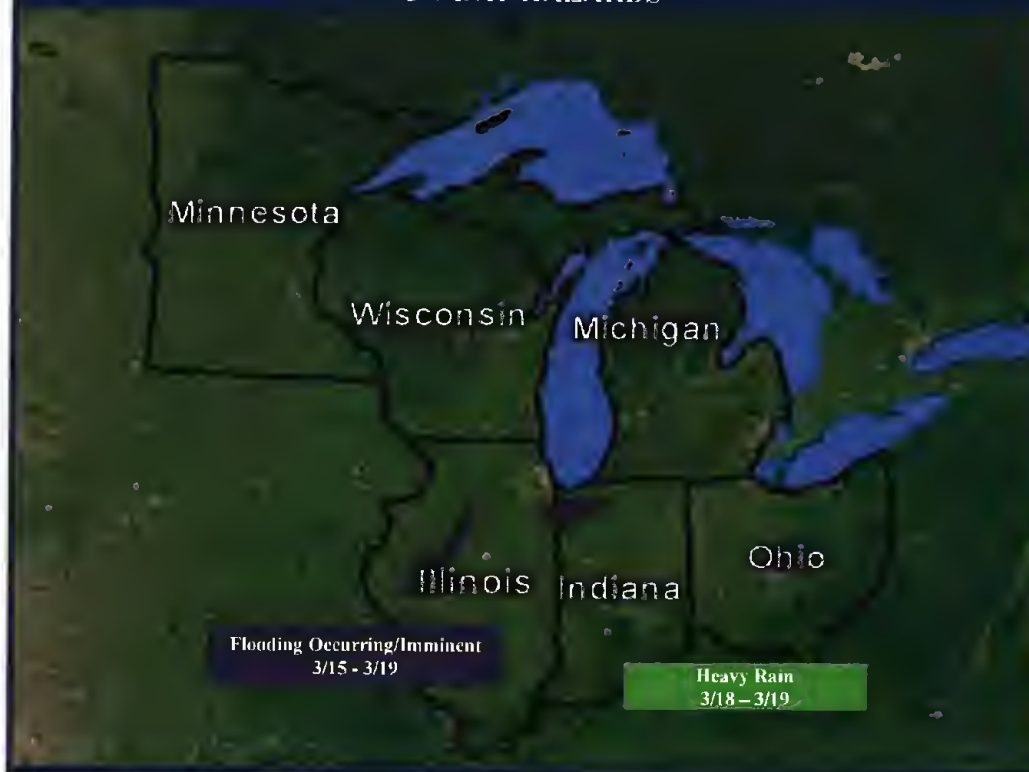


SIG. RIVER FLOOD OUTLOOK



EXTENDED OUTLOOK

3-7 DAY HAZARDS



6-10 TEMPERATURE



6-10 PRECIPITATION



INFLUENZA LIKE ILLNESS (ILI) Activity



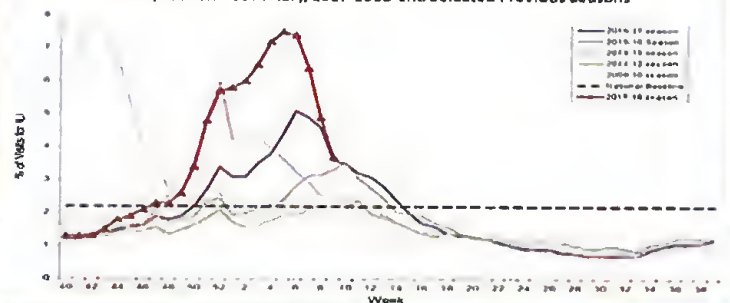
Summary

Week ending March 3, 2018:

- **ILI Surveillance:** People seeing their health care provider for ILI was 3.7% (-1.3%)
 - Above national baseline of 2.2%
- **ILI Activity:**
 - Minimal:** OH **Low:** IL **Moderate:** WI, MN **High:** IN, MI
- **Mortality Surveillance:** Proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was 8.8% (↓1.3%)
 - Above epidemic threshold of 7.2%

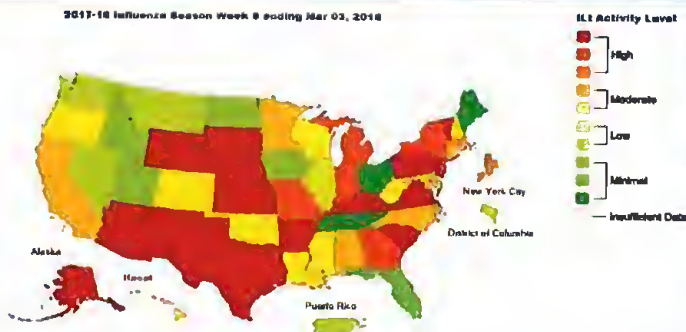
Percentage of Visits for ILI

Percentage of Visits for Influenza-like Illness (ILI) Reported by the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet), Weekly National Summary, 2017-2018 and Selected Previous Seasons



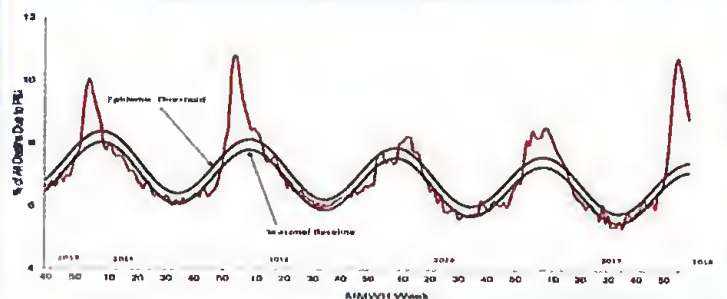
Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) Activity

2017-18 Influenza Season Week 9 ending Mar 03, 2018



Pneumonia & Influenza Mortality

Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality from the National Center for Health Statistics Mortality Surveillance System Data through the week ending February 17, 2018, as of March 8, 2018





**FEMA's mission is to support our citizens
and first responders to ensure that as a
nation we work together to build, sustain
and improve our capability to prepare for,
protect against, respond to, recover from
and mitigate all hazards.**

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THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY BY BULLETIN INTELLIGENCE WWW.BULLETININTELLIGENCE.COM/DHS

TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF
DATE: TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2018 5:00 AM EDT

TODAY'S EDITION

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LEADING DHS NEWS

A Visit Behind The Lines: President Trump Heads To California

By Adam Nagourney And Tim Arango
New York Times, March 12, 2018

LOS ANGELES — Since Donald J. Trump was elected president in November 2016, he has paid visits to Pennsylvania, Texas, Ohio, South Carolina, West Virginia, Florida and Wisconsin. He has gone to New York, New Jersey and Maryland. The president has even found time to stop off in Hawaii.

But there is one state where Mr. Trump's absence has been particularly glaring: California, the West Coast bastion of the Democratic Party.

That is about to change.

The president arrives in California on Tuesday morning for a brief trip into what the White House presumably views as enemy territory. The visit comes a week after Attorney General Jeff Sessions sued the state over three newly enacted immigration laws, contending that they were unconstitutional. In response, Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat, said that Mr. Trump was "basically going to war" with California.

The governor sent Mr. Trump a letter Monday in which he heralded California's economic success in recent years and quoted another Republican president — George W. Bush — in arguing that the state's economic well-being was critical to the nation's prosperity.

"Our prosperity is not built on isolation," Mr. Brown added. "Quite the opposite. California thrives because we welcome immigrants and innovators from across the globe."

Mr. Trump is flying into San Diego, where he will view prototypes of a border wall being built along the Mexican border, before speaking to troops at a nearby military base. From there, he is heading to Beverly Hills for a high-roller Republican fund-raiser before flying back to Washington on Wednesday morning. He is not planning to meet with any

California leaders, or tour any part of the state outside that stretch along the border.

It is the first time the president has come to this state since he campaigned here during the Republican presidential primary nearly two years ago. His appearances at the time set off demonstrations and clashes with the police, including one in which his motorcade was blockaded by protesters as he turned up to speak at a state Republican Party convention outside San Francisco. (Mr. Trump was forced to leave his vehicle and trudge up a hill, climbing over a fence, to get into the venue).

Similar demonstrations are expected again. Protesters — and some supporters — are planning rallies in the San Diego area before the president's visit on Tuesday. One group, Women's March San Diego, is planning to erect a large sign in opposition to the border wall that the president would see from the air, should he fly in by helicopter. Another group, which calls itself San Diegans for Secure Borders, is planning a rally on Tuesday in support of the president's immigration policies. Among those scheduled to attend, the group said, are "parents whose children were murdered by illegal aliens who crossed our unsecured border illegally to kill our citizens."

Los Angeles is girding for protests as well, though demonstrators may be confused over where to go. The location of Mr. Trump's fund-raiser, and where he is staying, has been kept secret. A spokeswoman for the Los Angeles Police Department, Officer Rosario Herrera, said no permits had been issued for major protests as of Monday morning, and that any road closings would be determined later in consultation with the Secret Service.

"We are prepared for anything that arises in the city of L.A.," she said.

Indeed, California Democrats seem eager for Mr. Trump's arrival: the state Democratic leader, Kevin de León, who is running for Senate, called for a demonstration even before Mr. Trump takes off from Washington, on Monday next to the Beverly Hills sign, with labor and civil rights groups.

Tensions between California and Washington have been high since Mr. Trump was elected, reflecting the

decidedly different political philosophies between the president and many Democrats here. A poll by the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, in December found that only 30 percent of respondents approved of his job performance; his national job approval rating has hovered around 40 percent, depending on the poll.

And California now looms as prime territory for Democrats seeking to retake Congress next year. At least seven Republican congressional seats in California are viewed as vulnerable, many of them located right near where Mr. Trump will be touching down. Republican strategists have advised candidates for office here to distance themselves from the president; a key question on Tuesday will be which, if any, Republican members of Congress will appear in public with the president.

Neither side appears inclined to calm the waters in advance of Mr. Trump's visit. Mr. Sessions, in addition to challenging the three California immigration laws, has also threatened to bring obstruction of justice charges against Libby Schaaf, the Democratic mayor of Oakland, for warning constituents this month of impending raids by federal immigration officers. Over the weekend, the president used his weekly address to criticize the state's immigration policies.

"California's leaders are in open defiance of federal law," Mr. Trump said. "They don't care about crime. They don't care about death and killings. They don't care about robberies. They don't care about the kind of things that you and I care about."

Mayor Eric M. Garcetti of Los Angeles described Mr. Trump as being out of touch with the nation and the world. "Why would our president come all the way across the country to look at wall samples in a state where he's taking away more people's health care than anywhere else?" he said.

At a news conference Monday morning, Xavier Becerra, California's attorney general, listed ways he sees his state as exceptional: "When President Trump comes to California, he'll see a state that's No.1 in manufacturing, agriculture, high-tech, in graduating young people from college," he said.

"Our state is going to keep moving forward, keep welcoming people who want to work hard, no matter what happens in Washington," he said.

Mr. Brown, who is entering his final year in office, used his letter to urge Mr. Trump to lend his support to the high-speed train line Mr. Brown has been trying to build between San Francisco and Los Angeles. The plan has been put in jeopardy because of cost overruns and opposition from Republicans in Washington.

"In California we are focusing on bridges, not walls," Mr. Brown said. He urged the president to visit the Central Valley

where "more than a dozen bridges and viaducts are being built for the nation's first and only High-Speed Rail line."

"You have lamented that 'we don't have one fast train' in our country," Mr. Brown said. "Well, Mr. President, in California we are trying to fix that. We have a world-class train system under construction. We invite you to come aboard and truly 'Make America Great Again.'"

As California has emerged as the seat of the resistance to the Trump administration — on issues from immigration to climate change, to offshore oil drilling and marijuana policy — there has been a growing sense of separateness between here and the rest of the country.

Joe Mathews, a columnist for Zócalo Public Square, a nonprofit news site, recently compared California's tenuous ties with the rest of America to mainland China's relationship with Taiwan, which has its own ambitions of independence. Calling California a "halfway country" just like Taiwan, Mr. Mathews wrote, "our state has the ambitions, economy and democracy of a leading nation."

With the exception of the Civil War and the civil rights battles of the 1960s, there appears little historical precedent for the kind of clashes — in language and policy — that are now on view between California and Washington. "There's just a sense that the Trump presidency is moving the nation in the exact opposite direction from where California wants it to go," said Manuel Pastor, a professor of sociology and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California. "So the estrangement is quite high."

Professor Pastor argues in a forthcoming book, "State of Resistance," that California's own measures against undocumented immigrants in the 1990s prefigured Mr. Trump's hard-line positions on immigration. California voters approved a 1994 ballot initiative that would have cut off state benefits to illegal immigrants, a move that was championed by the Republican governor at the time, Pete Wilson. The initiative was thrown out in court, but the Republican embrace of it contributed to the party's long decline in political power as the state became more Democratic and Latino.

Trump To Raise \$5 Million In California For Re-election Bid

Reuters, March 12, 2018

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'This Visit Is A Political Stunt:' Trump's California Trip Draws Criticism From State Leaders

By John Wagner

Washington Post, March 12, 2018

SAN DIEGO — When President Trump touches down here Tuesday, he will be landing in the cradle of the resistance to his presidency — and then proceed to thumb his nose at those who oppose him.

On his first trip to California since taking office, Trump is scheduled to head down to the U.S.-Mexico border to inspect eight prototypes for his long-promised wall.

While the move is being enthusiastically welcomed by Trump's supporters, it is expected to draw protests on both sides of the border. And it invited scorn Monday from leading Democrats here who have sought through legislation and lawsuits to fight an array of Trump policies, ranging from immigration to offshore drilling to health-care access.

"This visit is a political stunt to rally his base around a stupid boondoggle," said California Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León, who also accused Trump of "misogyny and bigotry" and suggested his visit to the border is an attempt to distract voters from the ongoing investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election.

While in the Golden State, Trump will also address military personnel at the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar here and attend a posh Republican National Committee fundraiser in Beverly Hills. There are no plans to meet with Gov. Jerry Brown or other leading Democrats in a state that Trump lost to Hillary Clinton by more than 4 million votes.

Despite his more than year-long absence, Trump is no stranger to California, and it bears markings of his success. Trump owns a home in Beverly Hills and a golf club in Rancho Palos Verdes, and he moved the staging of his reality show, "The Apprentice," to the state after ratings started to slump in New York.

Still — as Tuesday's visit will likely bear out — Trump's relationship with state leaders have been openly hostile and continue to deteriorate.

"I don't think he would be going there if the border wall prototypes were in Texas," said Barry Bennett, a Republican consultant who advised Trump during the 2016 election. "It's incredibly out of touch with the rest of the country. Politically, it's not a place to waste too many seconds."

The last time Trump was in San Diego, for a May 2016 campaign rally downtown, police in riot gear dispersed large crowds of protesters who clashed with Trump supporters. Thirty-five people were arrested.

In anticipation of what could be another unruly scene, police last week announced a "temporary restriction area" around the site of the border wall prototypes and pledged to prosecute anyone who brings in knives, bricks, baseball bats, firearms or other "implements of riot."

Trump's visit comes on the heels of a trip last week by Attorney General Jeff Sessions to announce the Trump administration is suing California in an attempt to block its "sanctuary" laws. Among other things, the administration is targeting a provision that bars local authorities from asking

about the immigration status of people during routine interactions.

At a news conference in response, Brown said it was unprecedented for an attorney general to "act more like Fox News than a law enforcement officer" and angrily accused the administration of "basically going to war against the state of California, the engine of the American economy."

Trump ramped up the rhetoric further during his weekly address on Saturday, accusing California leaders of acting "in open defiance of federal law."

"They don't care about crime," Trump said. "They don't care about death and killings. They don't care about robberies. They don't care about the kind of things that you and I care about."

On the eve of Tuesday's visit, both Brown and California Attorney General Xavier Becerra — who has sued the Trump administration 28 times — suggested additions to Trump's itinerary, knowing full well he wasn't likely to listen.

No president since Franklin Roosevelt has waited so long since his inauguration to visit California — and he traveled by train.

"I'm not sure why it took him so long given California leads the nation in so many ways," Becerra told reporters during a conference call, suggesting that Trump take time to learn about some of the state's policy successes, including what he called nation-leading gun-safety measures.

That was a not-so-subtle dig at the White House, which on Sunday unveiled a series of initiatives in response to the schools shootings in Parkland, Fla., that many gun-safety advocates criticized as too feeble.

In a letter to Trump that Brown's office made public on Monday morning, the governor encouraged the president to visit the state's Central Valley, where preparations are underway for a bullet train from San Francisco to Los Angeles — including the construction of bridges to accommodate the high-speed line.

"You see, in California we are focusing on bridges, not walls," Brown said in the letter, in which he also recounted visits by other presidents who celebrated that state's diversity and recognized its role in the U.S. economy.

Brown and other California officials are quick to note that California on its own represents the sixth largest economy in the world.

"California's economy is larger than Vladimir Putin's Russia," as de León put it.

The border wall prototypes Trump plans to visit are on display in a dusty lot near the border east of here. The 30-foot-tall barriers use varying configurations of steel, concrete — even spikes — to create ramparts far more formidable than almost anything in place along the 2,000-mile border with Mexico.

The Trump administration is seeking \$18 billion for border wall construction over the next 10 years, an amount

that would pay for roughly 300 miles of new barriers where none currently exist and allow the government to replace another 400 miles of older "legacy" fencing.

While protests of Trump's survey of the prototypes are being planned, at least one group is pledging a rally in of support of the president's vision.

Jeff Schwilk, founder of San Diegans for Secure Borders, said his group held a similar rally in December that drew about 150 people. This one could be far larger based on interest he's seeing on Facebook, he said.

"This is way off the charts," Schwilk said. "Everyone wants to come and show their support from all over the state, and even from Arizona."

He said Trump supporters are glad to finally get a glimpse of the president in a state run by "a rogue California government."

"We'd kind of been left out here hanging," Schwilk said.

Others wish Trump would stay away.

"He's coming to spread his fear, because in my view, he's a terrible man," said Pablo Alvarado, executive director of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, a Los Angeles-based advocacy group.

Alvarado predicted that Trump will also be met in the Los Angeles area by "plenty of people protesting. He's non-gratis. California is a very diverse, multicultural state. It's the antithesis of what Trump stands for."

On Monday, Alvarado's organization was among those supportive of a new federal lawsuit in San Francisco challenging the Trump administration's plans to end temporary protected status for about 200,000 immigrants from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan.

Thomas E. Mann, a senior fellow with the Brookings Institution, suggested one reason Trump hasn't been eager to return to California: It almost certainly won't be part of his electoral calculus in 2020.

Clinton bested Trump by 30 percentage points in 2016. While the state produced two presidents in the modern era — Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan — rapid growth among Latino and Asian voters, who lean Democratic, have made the state far more difficult for Republicans.

Democrats hold every statewide office and control both chambers of the legislature by sizable margins.

"It wasn't that long ago California was competitive in presidential elections, so there was ample incentive to go there," said Mann, who has lived for the past three years in California, where he is now a resident scholar at the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California.

There's really no political incentive for Trump to visit now, Mann said. "What's the point of doing it if all you're going to do is stir up the opposition?"

When asked about the trip at a Monday's briefing for reporters, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said that isn't Trump's aim.

"While ... he may not have won that state, there are certainly a lot of support for this president, not just there, but across the country, and he looks forward to being there, and presenting a lot of those specific policies," she said.

De Leon said California "is not Trump country. It never has been, never will be." But, he said, the state has a long tradition of accepting outsiders.

"The Golden State has always welcomed those from all over the world, even Queens," de Leon said, referring to the borough of New York where Trump grew up.

Nick Miroff contributed to this story.

Police Preparing For Big Protests As Trump Makes First California Visit As President

By Richard Winton

Los Angeles Times, March 12, 2018

With President Trump heading to the Los Angeles area Tuesday for a high-dollar campaign fundraiser on his first White House visit to California, law enforcement will be ratcheting up in preparation for potential protests.

While details of the Trump visit remain clouded in secrecy, he is scheduled to attend an evening fundraiser for his reelection campaign when he visits California for the first time in his presidency and Los Angeles police and sheriff's officials are ready for spontaneous protests. Earlier in the day, Trump will inspect prototypes for a border wall, a key component of his campaign platform of a tough line on immigration.

His administration and the state's Democratic leadership have repeatedly clashed over immigration, environmental and other policies. The visit comes on the heels of the Department of Justice suing California over state laws that offer protections for immigrants in the country illegally.

"We are prepared for anything," said Los Angeles Deputy Police Chief Horace Frank, who oversees the counter-terrorism and special operations bureau. Frank said while no permitted protests in the form of marches are planned, authorities do expect to see protesters and supporters out in numbers during a presidential visit.

At least one protest is planned in the Beverly Hills area between 4 and 8 p.m Tuesday by a Facebook group, Trump Not Welcome in LA. The LAPD is preparing for many more protests of various sizes on the Westside.

"I anticipate many more once his itinerary is known," said LAPD Deputy Chief Dennis Kato, who oversees the department's West Bureau.

Trump's earlier visits to L.A. while he was a candidate did bring out demonstrators.

Some protests are also planned for the San Diego area.

The political group Union del Barrio's Los Angeles chapter is organizing the Beverly Hills protest.

Ron Gochez, a political secretary with the chapter, said more than 1,000 people were following the Beverly Hills protest Facebook page even though he was still unclear about where the protest would take place.

"He cannot step foot in this state and not expect an organized response to denounce him," Gochez said.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell said as with all presidential visits his deputies will be involved in supporting the U.S. Secret Service and ensure public safety. McDonnell said so far there are no formal protests but he expects "more spontaneous social media drive" actions.

Police officials say they will enforce laws that require protesters to stay off the streets and private property and will keep supporters and protesters from engaging in physical confrontation. In the past, large immigration marches and anti-Trump protests have seen clashes between supporters of the president and his opponents.

Officers in the event of trouble will be ready to deploy to potential protest hot spots but will seek to keep a low profile unless needed, officials said.

While the fundraiser is described as in Beverly Hills, police officials there on Friday said the president is not scheduled to visit the city. Often areas in adjacent Los Angeles are described as Beverly Hills because they use a Beverly Hills postcode. Several key Trump fundraisers who actively participated in his presidential campaign live in those areas.

Donors will contribute up to \$250,000 each to Trump's campaign and various Republican National Committee accounts to attend the Tuesday evening event at an undisclosed location in Beverly Hills.

The fundraiser is being hosted by Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel, national finance chairman Todd Ricketts and deputy national finance chairman Elliott Broidy.

Whether supporters or protesters see much of the presidential motorcade remains to be seen. Exactly how Trump plans to get to the fundraiser remains under wraps as is usual for the U.S. Secret Service. President Obama, who regularly made the trip to Hollywood fundraisers, came in for criticism for repeatedly causing traffic jams on the city's Westside. On some occasions, that led Obama to fly a helicopter into an open field nearer the venue.

Earlier in the day, Trump will inspect border wall prototypes in San Diego. There the county sheriff seeing the potential for clashes between supporters and opponents has had the county institute a ban on a possession of a variety of objects including, rocks, bottles and bats surrounding the area where the president is slated to visit Tuesday morning.

The border wall is among the most contentious issues that have seen the heavily Democratic California and its politicians repeatedly clash with the Republican president.

Trump To Visit Largest Border City Opposed To Wall

Associated Press, March 12, 2018

SAN DIEGO (AP) — When Donald Trump visits San Diego to examine prototypes of the border wall, the president will be landing in the largest city on the U.S.-Mexico border to formally oppose his plans.

Numerous rallies are planned by groups both for-and-against Trump and his push to build a "big, beautiful wall" separating the two countries. Trump will make his first visit to the city Tuesday since being elected. Protests are also being planned across the border in Tijuana, Mexico.

Organizers on both sides were urging people to remain peaceful after recent scuffles at rallies in Southern California, including brawls at a Dec. 9 rally near where the prototypes stand.

In San Diego on Monday, immigrant activists, church leaders and elected officials held a press conference at the city's historic Chicano Park to call for demonstrations to show border communities do not support a wall. Standing in front of murals of Mexican revolutionaries, they chanted "We reject your hate! We don't need your racist wall!"

"It's really important that as a region, as a city that has firsthand understanding of what the border wall means for our communities that we stand against (this) and we send a strong message to DC to say this is something that we don't welcome," City Councilwoman Georgette Gomez said Monday.

Gomez sponsored a resolution passed by the San Diego City Council in 2017 opposing the wall, calling it detrimental to the city's environment and tourism. It also expressed the city's intent to divest from the companies involved in the construction, financing and design of the wall.

Republican Mayor Kevin Faulconer did not support the resolution but also did not veto it. The mayor's office said Faulconer has been clear in his opposition to walls along the border but he did not want to blacklist companies involved in the construction of the prototypes.

"When some people look at the U.S.-Mexico border, they see division," Faulconer said in his state of the city address in 2017. "But here in San Diego we view it much differently. Rather than allowing the border to divide us, we're building bridges that connect us."

Jeff Schwilk, founder of San Diegans for Secure Borders, whose group participated in the rally in December near the prototypes that ended in clashes with counter-protesters, said the city council's resolution does not reflect the views of many residents, who feel the border is not secure. He said his organization respects free speech and hopes Tuesday's rally will be safe for participants.

"We absolutely want President Trump to feel welcome and to come inspect the prototypes so we can get the wall built," he said.

Trump on Tuesday is expected to be briefed on lessons learned from the prototypes' construction and meet with border agents and officers to ask what they need, said Jonathan Hoffman, Homeland Security spokesman.

The president is determined to fulfill his campaign promise and will not be swayed by California Republican lawmakers concerned the wall is a waste of money, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Monday.

"The president campaigned on this, he talked about it extensively and he's the president and this is something that he is not going to back away from," she said. "It's something that he's going to continue to push for."

California Gov. Jerry Brown on Monday invited Trump to also visit the state's high-speed rail construction projects.

"You see, in California we are focusing on bridges, not walls," Brown, a Democrat, said in a letter sent to Trump.

Trump's visit comes just days after his Justice Department sued to block California laws designed to protect people living in the U.S. illegally and U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions followed up with a speech in Sacramento that was immediately denounced by Brown, who said the Trump administration was "full of liars."

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who has sued the Trump administration more than two dozen times within the past year, said he hopes the president will take away lessons about the state's economic prowess, its strict gun laws and its environmental focus.

And he vowed to keep fighting against efforts to "send us backward."

Ronayne reported from Sacramento. John Antczak in Los Angeles, Elliot Spagat in San Diego, and Nancy Benac in Washington contributed to this report.

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Trump Intensifies War On California's Immigrant 'Sanctuaries'

By Dean Dechiaro

Roll Call (DC), March 12, 2018

The legal struggle over immigrant "sanctuaries" is escalating, and deep-blue California is ground zero.

"This is basically going to war," Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown said after Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced last week that the Trump administration is suing the state over three recently enacted laws limiting local and state law enforcement cooperation with federal immigration agents.

For the most part, President Donald Trump's effort to crack down on illegal immigration and so-called sanctuary cities, counties and states has yet to produce results. Multiple courts have blocked his efforts, Congress has struggled to pass legislation that would aid him, and local officials — especially those in California and other Democratic strongholds — are in open revolt.

"I think it's clear they've put a target on the back of California," said the state's junior senator, Democrat Kamala Harris. "Maybe because we've clearly stated that we're going to take a more humane approach that's in conflict with this administration's approach, which is to target immigrants."

Watch: How The Senate Immigration Debate Stalled Rolling back?

If Trump's fortunes change, it could be at the state's expense. California could see its three landmark sanctuary laws rolled back, meaning more of its undocumented residents could face deportation. And the state could lose millions of dollars in federal funding.

A federal judge on March 5 ruled in Trump's favor, allowing the Justice Department to withhold from the state — for now, at least — a \$1 million grant because of its sanctuary policies. Sessions announced the lawsuit days later, accusing California of using "every power it has to undermine duly established immigration law in America."

Sessions told an audience of law enforcement officials that the administration would "fight these unjust, unfair and unconstitutional policies" and was confident of winning.

In a separate effort, DOJ has threatened to issue subpoenas to the state and seven cities and counties, including Los Angeles and San Francisco, if each does not hand over documents and other information related to their sanctuary policies.

The rift was on full display in Oakland in February when Mayor Libby Schaaf warned the public about an imminent federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement operation, "not to panic our residents but to protect them," she said. The raids in Northern California in the following days still resulted in arrests of more than 230 undocumented immigrants, but the administration blamed Schaaf, a Democrat, for helping an additional 800 people evade capture.

"Those are 800 wanted criminals that are now at large in that community — 800 wanted criminals that ICE will now have to pursue by other means with more difficulty in dangerous situations, all because of one irresponsible action," Sessions said on Wednesday. "So here's my message to Mayor Schaaf: How dare you?"

Tensions between Trump and California — home to roughly 2.3 million undocumented immigrants, according to the Pew Research Center — have never run higher. The chasm could widen this week, when Trump is expected to visit the state to view prototypes for his proposed wall on the

U.S.-Mexico border, which were constructed near San Diego.
Two-front war

As Sessions takes on California's sanctuaries in court, the Homeland Security Department is responding in its own way: with force.

ICE has promoted other high-profile operations in the state, including a sweep in Los Angeles last May that resulted in the arrests of more than 200 people. But behind the scenes, the agency has been clinical, making more than 6,200 arrests from October through December, the most recent time frame for which data is available. That's about 16 percent of all arrests nationwide, according to ICE.

Activists have accused ICE of trying to instill fear in immigrant communities, a potent tool in the enforcement plank of Trump's hard-line immigration platform.

"For the Trump administration to task its ICE officers to go out into these places for political reasons is really appalling," said David Leopold, a former president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. "It doesn't do anything to make the borders more secure or keep felons off the street."

The majority of the undocumented immigrants arrested have had criminal records, according to ICE.

"They're doing it in a systematic way, not simply arresting the most illegal aliens they can find," said Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates tougher enforcement. "If that were all you wanted to do, you'd start cruising by Home Depots and picking up day laborers."

Thomas D. Homan, ICE's acting director, has argued that California's sanctuary jurisdictions make raids necessary. He said sanctuaries like Oakland "force ICE officers to make more arrests out in the community, which poses increased risks for law enforcement and the public."

Trump's supporters disagree with the notion that he's unfairly targeting California.

"I think it's wrong to describe this as a vendetta," Vaughan said. "This is a logical, operational response." Legal battle ahead

For all the administration's efforts to stop sanctuary jurisdictions in the courtroom, the coming legal battle could be uncharted territory.

Senior DOJ officials, who briefed reporters on the condition they would not be named, described the Trump lawsuit as novel because the state laws are untested in court.

Two of the statutes limit the degree to which local police may communicate with ICE and what information they may share, including the date on which an undocumented individual is released from jail. The third requires California employers to verify that ICE has a warrant or subpoena before allowing them to check workers' immigration status.

The government plans to argue that each law defies the Constitution's supremacy clause, which holds that state laws

cannot pre-empt federal ones. Officials said they would likely invoke a 2012 Supreme Court ruling against the state of Arizona, which had passed a set of tough immigration laws deemed by the high court to be in violation of the supremacy clause.

"Just imagine if a state passed a law forbidding employers from cooperating with [the Occupational Safety and Health Administration] in ensuring workplace safety. Or the Environmental Protection Agency, looking for a polluter," Sessions said.

Rep. Ro Khanna, who represents a district in Silicon Valley, said the attorney general's view stands in stark contrast to his past positions on states' rights.

"Here's what's so ironic about it: Jeff Sessions used to believe in federalism," the California Democrat said. "It's not even an issue of immigration as this is an issue of the balance of power between cities, states and the federal government."

Brown said Sessions' characterization of California's laws "is simply not true." The governor told reporters that "nothing stops the federal government from coming to a jail. The release records are public. There's nothing stopping the sheriff [from] working with ICE."

The Justice Department is seeking a preliminary injunction against the three statutes, a process officials estimate could take a few weeks. Legal experts say the Trump administration's track record on sanctuary cities doesn't bode well for the coming legal fight.

"With one exception, every court decision on this has gone against the administration," said Ilya Somin, a professor at George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School. "I think that trend is likely to continue." 'Pure red meat'

The DOJ's lawsuit served to reignite a hot-button issue as the primary campaign season gets underway. It is likely to further turn California's Latinos against the Republican Party, a trend that began with mass protests against a 1994 GOP-backed immigration ballot initiative, Proposition 187.

But the state hasn't been in political play for nearly a decade. Trump's true aim, his critics argue, is to vilify California in order to fire up his own nativist supporters.

"This is pure red meat for the base," Brown said.

Immigration hawks have spent years lambasting sanctuary jurisdictions. The debate gained national attention after the 2015 death of Kate Steinle, who was fatally shot in San Francisco by an undocumented criminal with multiple convictions and prior deportations who had previously been in local police custody.

When the man was acquitted of murder earlier this year, Trump took to Twitter to call the verdict "a complete travesty of justice."

Republicans in Congress have for years sought to force sanctuaries to comply with ICE by threatening to withhold certain federal funds, but have consistently fallen short

without substantial Democratic support. Last month, the Senate took up a proposal by Sen. Patrick J. Toomey that would authorize the government to block sanctuary jurisdictions from receiving economic development grants.

The Pennsylvania Republican's proposal fell six votes short, but it nonetheless exposed the vulnerability of Democratic senators running for re-election in states Trump won in 2016. Four of these Democrats — Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, Joe Donnelly of Indiana, Joe Manchin III of West Virginia and Claire McCaskill of Missouri — voted for the sanctuary proposal.

Even if Trump doesn't prevail in rolling back California's statutes, the lawsuit and continued threat of ICE raids are sure to play well with his supporters. Whether the administration wins in court is of little consequence in the political arena.

"If they lose these cases, they're not much worse off than they were before," Somin said. "It's politically advantageous even if they don't have much success with it.

Kate Ackley contributed to this report.

Border Fence Meets A Wall Of Skepticism In Tijuana, Where Residents Say U.S.-Mexico Ties Transcend Any Physical Barriers

By Richard Marosi

Los Angeles Times, March 12, 2018

After weeks of testing, the eight prototypes for President Trump's "big, beautiful" wall will share center stage on Tuesday with Trump during his first presidential visit to California.

As Trump inspects the prototypes and poses for photos along the border east of San Diego, he'll be just yards away from a Tijuana slum where people have formulated their own ideas about them.

The 30-foot structures — built with varying mixes of concrete and steel tubes — draw residents, tourists and even Tijuana police officers who pose for selfies in the Rancho Escondido neighborhood. They climb atop piles of rubber tires or tiptoe on dirt mounds for a peek over the 7-foot border fence into the testing site.

The towering wall segments will offer Trump a powerful platform as he pushes to secure \$25 billion for border security.

Frankie Contreras, 45, who has lived in the neighborhood for decades, said he prefers the symbolism of another imposing piece of infrastructure that will be hard to miss when the presidential entourage shows up: overhead power lines.

They link power plants in Tijuana and San Diego. Along with a nearby underground natural gas pipeline, they provide energy for millions of people in both countries. To residents

like Contreras, those are the kind of ties between the U.S. and Mexico that transcend any wall.

"We need each other no matter what happens," he said.

Trump is not expected to announce which of the prototypes will be used, but he may express a preference.

Either way, the visit is expected to generate demonstrations on both sides of the border. Security has been heightened with authorities in Tijuana and San Diego working together to safeguard the area.

Whichever wall is selected, it will not likely be erected in California, where barriers already line most of the border and where replacements, planned for this year, have different designs. The wall, according to the most recent proposed budget of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, is slated for the Texas border with Mexico.

Federal authorities chose to build the prototypes in San Diego in part because of the region's easy access for teams of agents that have been testing each of the walls.

They have been assaulting the prototypes, using jackhammers, blow torches, ropes and other tools that test the walls' capacity to repel intruders.

From Rancho Escondido, the efforts seem misspent.

Border barriers have been part of the scenery here for years. There are two fences, bolstered by cameras and lighting that make the area among the most heavily fortified along the border.

Although Trump often portrays the border as chaotic and porous, the San Diego-Tijuana border was largely tamed long ago — and has become a model for effective border enforcement.

The double fencing lines most of the 14-mile border from the Pacific Ocean to Otay Mountain. Apprehensions of illegal crossers have dropped for years, and most smuggling organizations have moved to other, more remote areas.

Tijuana is among Mexico's most dangerous cities, but there is relatively little spillover violence. San Diego is among this country's safest biggest cities, with 34 homicides last year. Tijuana had 1,780.

The region does remain vulnerable to drug smuggling, but most of the illicit cargo is funneled through the region's two ports of entry, inside hidden compartments of vehicles.

A wall won't do anything to stop that, said Marco Zamora, a U.S. citizen who has lived in Rancho Escondido for 20 years. Zamora crosses the border for work every day and said customs inspectors seem demoralized and overworked.

"They're not checking much these days," he said. "They don't seem very energized."

From Zamora's two-story house, the border is a two-block stretch of deeply rutted dirt roads lined with shanties and junkyards. Roosters wake the neighborhood, and ice cream vendors push their carts around garbage piles and stolen cars stripped clean of doors and seats.

But Trump's vision, they say, is excessive, not so much an enforcement tool as a symbol of hostility toward Mexico.

Jesus Martinez, a U.S. citizen from Bakersfield who was visiting the area last week to scout warehouse locations for his furniture business, said the size of the wall prototypes were overwhelming.

He voted for Trump, but said he disagreed on the necessity of the wall. "He's not very diplomatic," Martinez said after studying the barriers through a hole in the existing border fence.

Some residents, long familiar with the tactics of smugglers, have been doing their own armchair analyses of the wall prototypes. The steel could be cut through with blow torches within 15 minutes, some said. Though a solid concrete wall would present more challenges, it would allow smugglers to operate without being seen by border agents.

And then there are always tunnels. A warehouse district just a few miles west is the busiest tunneling area on the border.

"Chapo is the one who showed us how to get across, just go under," said Contreras, referring to Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, the drug cartel crime boss, currently in custody in the U.S., who is said to have built numerous drug tunnels.

Barriers weren't the only infrastructure built along this stretch of the frontier. Over the years, utility companies linked up power plants in Tijuana and San Diego, running electrical wires slung from giant towers and a natural gas pipeline.

In a debate so dominated by symbols, to many of Rancho Escondido's residents the image of two countries working to heat and light homes will always be the more potent one.

"You can build a wall to the heavens," said Gilberto Alvarez, 42, "but Mexico and the U.S. will always be joined together."

richard.marosi@latimes.com

Twitter: @richmarosi

San Diego's Smart Border Efforts Deserve Trump's Attention

By Steve Williams

San Diego Union-Tribune, March 12, 2018

We welcome President Donald Trump to the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Beyond NAFTA, DACA and "sanctuary laws," there is a narrative rarely addressed in national media, let alone the Beltway. It is one that advances the idea of a "smart border."

We are a \$230 billion economy of 5 million residents and 2 million employees. We represent 40 percent of the U.S. and Mexico southern border population and are the busiest land border crossing in our hemisphere, with 120,000 vehicles, 63,000 pedestrians and 7,000 trucks crossing back

and forth every day. There are 600 world-class export manufacturing plants in Tijuana; \$42 billion worth of goods are traded at Otay Mesa each year.

Rather than building higher walls, we promote the coexistence of security and trade by using more sophisticated technologies to detect and interdict unauthorized entries and by reducing wait times at our ports to spur commerce and trade.

Critical to our success is a smooth flow of upstanding people, authorized vehicles and legitimate cargo. Although our prosperity is significantly tied to border flows, border wait times have not kept pace with our growth. Traffic congestion and delays cost our binational economy an estimated \$6 billion annually in gross output and 51,000 jobs. Our hemisphere's busiest border crossing is "dumb" and slow when what is needed is a "smart" border.

We have a management challenge. Historically, the changes we make to improve our crossings are haphazard and the infrequent ones that are well-planned (e.g., San Ysidro Port of Entry's \$750 million modernization) can take many years to happen. Better planning and processes, smarter systems and more advanced technologies coupled with more robust private enterprise participation and better collaboration with Mexico are required.

Coming from private enterprise, President Trump will appreciate two examples of how private money supports better flows at our border. CBX, the recently built privately owned cross-border pedestrian terminal and bridge that takes air travelers from the U.S. to the Tijuana airport and back in 10 minutes over an 400-foot walkway, had nearly 2 million passengers last year. Baja Rail, a Baja California company, recently rehabilitated the Mexican portion of the old Spreckels railway and will soon do the same with the U.S. segment, giving our export manufacturing industry a new alternative for freight movement to the East Coast of the United States.

If anyone in the current administration knows our region's challenges and capabilities, it is Peter Navarro, a homegrown talent. We welcome working with him and the Trump administration to find better ways to improve our ports and the flow of legitimate travel and commerce while implementing the most effective security measures.

There is no one better for a safe yet "frictionless" border than those who live here. Border residents' knowledge and experiences of what actually works should drive national policy on secure and smart borders.

Opinion: Once Again On Immigration, A Victory For The All-Or-Nothings

By Theresa Cardinal Brown

Roll Call (DC), March 12, 2018

When President Donald Trump travels to California later this month to view the prototype designs for a new

border wall, perhaps he will take a moment to think about what could have been. Because as things stand, those eight 30-foot-long samples are the only walls likely to be built.

Trump could have had his wall. He had numerous opportunities to get it, dating all the way back to the "Chuck and Nancy" deal last fall. All he had to do was agree to something he says he wants — a permanent replacement for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program he canceled in September.

There was fleeting hope that a temporary DACA extension and limited border wall funding could be included in the omnibus negotiations wrapping up by next week, but that deal, too, seems to have fallen by the wayside.

Trump, majorities in Congress, and the American people fully support a permanent DACA solution. So why have scores of so-called deadlines for action passed, with no likely deal on the horizon?

For one, with DACA tied up in the courts, Congress thinks the urgency is gone. I suspect DACA recipients would say otherwise: Once the courts rule, the program could be shut down immediately, throwing their lives into even more chaos. Even those who applied for an extension after the court ruling can't legally work, may have their schooling interrupted, and could face deportation proceedings while they wait, perhaps up to five months, for approval.

Watch: Trump — Democrats 'Nowhere to Be Found' On DACA

So here we stand, yet again, with attempts at an immigration deal failing to get enough votes, and Congress and the administration poised to do nothing more than point fingers at each other and argue that it's the other party's fault.

As Shakespeare said, "A plague o' both your houses!"

It frankly doesn't matter who gets the blame. If both sides had been willing to set aside some of what they said they most wanted, a deal could have been struck. If Trump had put off his changes to the legal immigration system — ending the Diversity Visa Program and curtailing family-sponsored immigration, the most controversial of his four "pillars" — he could have fixed DACA and had his wall. If Democrats and advocates had leaned into the border security issue earlier (knowing that it was a boondoggle), and perhaps committed to subsequent discussions of legal immigration changes, we could have seen a path to citizenship for many young people.

Or maybe not. That's because there is a small, but very vocal, political minority on both sides for whom doing nothing outweighs doing something. Their all-or-nothing wishes have been realized.

On one side are those who never supported "amnesty," and were only inclined to go along if they could get the significant reductions in immigration they really wanted. They also knew the only way to get those reductions, over the objections of Democrats and most Republicans, was to

attach them to DACA legislation. If that scuttled any agreement, they wouldn't have to hold their noses at amnesty, and would be no worse off. In fact, the failure of lawmakers to cut an admittedly hard deal gives these restrictionists the victory of keeping the status quo.

On the other side is the group for whom no deal is better than a "bad" deal — one that concedes to the enforcement demands of the other side while failing to protect everyone deemed deserving of benefit. But without enough compromise, no deal always wins.

This exact scenario has played out often over the last two decades. Yet Americans want our immigration system changed. Poll after poll shows a lot of support for a system that allows immigrants who want to work in the United States to stay while ensuring that more abide by the rules than go around them.

Americans are willing to provide a path to legalization to those who have been here and want to "get right with the law." They want to see a new immigration system that helps America, helps immigrants become Americans, and reflects the respect for the law that is an American value.

But mostly, they are just sick and tired of absolutely nothing getting done. They don't care about who's to blame. They will blame both sides until people are able to come together, agree to set aside the most extreme positions, and get what the country needs: a bipartisan new start on immigration. The impetus is still there.

Theresa Cardinal Brown is BPC's director of immigration and cross-border policy. She served as a policy adviser at U.S. Customs and Border Protection and DHS under the Bush and Obama administrations, including as director of the Immigration Legislation Task Force in the DHS Office of Policy. She also was director of immigration and border policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and associate director of business immigration advocacy at the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

The Bipartisan Policy Center is a D.C.-based think tank that actively promotes bipartisanship. BPC works to address the key challenges facing the nation through policy solutions that are the product of informed deliberations by former elected and appointed officials, business and labor leaders, and academics and advocates from both ends of the political spectrum. BPC is currently focused on health, energy, national security, the economy, financial regulatory reform, housing, immigration, infrastructure, and governance. Follow BPC on Twitter or Facebook.

Don't Forget: 'Dreamers' Are Being Bartered For A Wall

By Richard Cohen

Washington Post, March 12, 2018

They left Hamburg on May 13, 1939, and reached Havana 14 days later. The ship's name was the St. Louis, and it held 937 passengers, most of them Jews fleeing Nazi Germany and hoping, while in Cuba, to be admitted to the United States. But the Cuban authorities barred all but a couple dozen of them, and so the ship sailed on, getting so close to America that passengers could see the lights of Miami. Still, the United States would not admit them, and so the St. Louis returned to Europe where, ultimately, 254 of the passengers died in the Holocaust. They were that era's "dreamers."

The dreamers of today are different. They are not in a life-or-death situation, and they are not unwelcome in the countries of their birth. Yet once again Washington is showing a mean hostility to immigrants — one so fervently held that it is blind to contradictions. It is willing to be morally wrong as long as it is legally right.

The dreamers of today are the approximately 700,000 immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. The largest number of them were around 3 when they came across the border — which, in case President Trump is reading, is a bit young to be a rapist or even a gang member. (Almost 5 percent were younger than 1.) These onetime kids are now anywhere from 16 to 35. They live all over the country, but the largest concentration is in California, the Los Angeles area, with Texas coming in second. The vast majority came from Mexico, with El Salvador a distant second and Venezuela bringing up the rear. (No one should have to live in Venezuela the way things are going there these days.)

Periodically, Congress makes an attempt to settle the status of these dreamers. (Their status is to be determined by legislation.) Periodically, also, Trump issues a statement either professing sympathy or hostility toward the dreamers. He has vowed to end the program that allows them to remain in this country or promised "to work something out that's going to make people happy and proud."

As is often the case with Trump, the victim here is himself. He is torn over the dreamers. Perplexed. Their predicament is a "very difficult thing" for him. "I love these kids. I love kids. I have kids and grandkids." By now, as you can tell, the hankie is soaked. The president is experiencing a rare bout of empathy. It is a dizzying experience, a kind of emotional vertigo. But he rights himself and later insists that the law is the law. Either make the kids legal or give them the boot.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, as it happens the last president from New York, was anguished over the plight of Europe's Jews. But in 1939 he had his eye on winning an unprecedented third term. He had told Americans in his 1933 inaugural address that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," but he himself feared American anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant sentiment exacerbated by the Depression's vast unemployment. It took him until 1944 to publicly denounce

the murder of Europe's Jews, and when passengers on the St. Louis cabled him pleading for admittance, he simply did not reply.

Roosevelt had to deal with a xenophobia that was not of his own making and the fear that the war he knew was coming would be characterized as one fought on behalf of Jews. Trump, in contrast, has taken the bellows of his ugly anti-immigrant rhetoric to the embers of American xenophobia and abetted a conflagration. He began his presidential campaign by denigrating Mexicans. "They are not our friend, believe me," he said. "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." As recently as last week at his Pennsylvania rally, he mentioned the MS-13 gang on Long Island as if it were the consequence of a lax immigration policy and not an aberration. These are thugs, no doubt about it, but they should not be driving immigration policy.

It remains inconceivable that the Trump administration and a politically timid Congress will round up 700,000 or so otherwise ordinary Americans and deport them to the countries of their birth. In the meantime, though, the dreamers live with appropriate anxiety about their future. They are being held hostage for the wall that Trump wants built — a squalid deal in which human beings are bartered for an unnecessary barrier and, in the process, America sells its soul.

Secretary Of Homeland Security Visits San Diego

By Shannon Handy

XETV-TV San Diego, March 12, 2018

SAN DIEGO (NEWS 8) — A day before the President tours the border, a top member of his cabinet was in San Diego on Monday.

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen spent the morning at the U.S. Coast Guard base.

It was Nielsen's first visit to San Diego as Homeland Security Secretary. Not only did she speak to members of the Coast Guard, but she also went out on the water with them to see how they track down and stop illegal activity.

News 8 followed behind Nielsen as she got a first-hand look at the Coast Guard's maritime security response team — one of just two specialized units in the United States.

Known as MSRT they respond to cases involving drug smuggling and illegal immigration, which may be the main reason behind the secretary's last-minute visit.

It coincides with President Trump's planned tour of the border wall prototypes on Tuesday.

Prior to being on the water, Nielsen was on board a helicopter taking a look at the prototypes herself.

Following her aerial tour, Nielsen addressed hundreds of coast guard members saying her first priority as Homeland Security Secretary is border security.

"True border security involves a wall system, which of course includes the physical infrastructure, but also mission-ready agents, patrol roads, sensor technology and support resources," Nielsen said.

Nielsen told the crowd she's also focused on encountering terrorism, preparing for natural disasters and combating cyber threats.

"A cyber-attack could in fact, today, have catastrophic effects on public health, safety, national security and our democracy," Nielsen said.

She reiterated the importance of working together – that includes reaching across the aisle when it comes to immigration reform.

"That's why we're committed to working with Congress on both sides of the aisle," said Nielsen. "This should not be a political issue to find legislative solutions to existing laws that are incompatible with public safety."

The secretary spent the rest of her day meeting citizen immigration services. Tuesday, she will be with President Trump as he tours the border wall prototypes.

Secretary Of Homeland Security Tours Border Wall Prototypes

[KNSD-TV San Diego](#), March 12, 2018

A key member of President Donald Trump's national security team is already in San Diego.

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen arrived in San Diego Monday on a last-minute scheduled visit, on her way home from South Korea.

Secretary Nielsen spent the morning getting an aerial tour of the border wall prototypes before landing at the U.S. Coast Guard.

She addressed the members of the Coast Guard Monday, emphasizing her four priorities as DHS Secretary: border security, counterterrorism, increasing national resilience, and cybersecurity.

"While we've worked extraordinarily hard to raise the bar in security across the globe, we are constantly reminded we live in a very dangerous time and a dangerous world," Secretary Nielsen said.

Secretary Nielsen got a tour of some of San Diego's most important ports, by boat.

The Coast Guard's Maritime Security Response Team demonstrated maneuvers in the water that are used during large-scale anti-terrorism efforts.

This is Secretary Nielsen's first visit to San Diego since her confirmation in December 2017.

She will be touring the wall prototypes with President Trump tomorrow.

Secretary Of Homeland Security Visits Coast Guard Headquarters

[KSWB-TV San Diego](#), March 12, 2018

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen visited Coast Guard Station San Diego a day before President Donald Trump was scheduled to visit the region.

Nielsen thanked Coast Guard members for their service along the border.

"Semper Paratus and thank you always," she said.

This was Nielsen's first trip to San Diego since being named the head of Homeland Security. The secretary viewed the prototype walls being built in Otay Mesa next to the US-Mexico border from above while flying in a Coast Guard Jayhawk helicopter.

After the border flight, Nielsen reviewed the Coast Guard's Fast Marine Response units in action as they sped around San Diego Bay in formation.

Secretary Nielsen will spend the night in San Diego and visit the border wall with President Trump on Tuesday after he arrives at about 11:30 a.m. at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar.

Homeland Security Secretary Meets With Coast Guard In San Diego

[KGTU-TV San Diego](#), March 12, 2018

Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen visited San Diego Monday, making her first local stop since joining President Trump's cabinet in December.

Nielsen arrived in San Diego after a long flight from South Korea, where she helped represent the United States at the Paralympics. The trip also coincides with President Trump's arrival in San Diego Tuesday.

Nielsen spent most of her day with the Coast Guard. She took a helicopter ride for an aerial tour of the border wall prototype site, then gave a speech to the Coast Guardsman.

"True border security involves a wall system, which, of course, include the physical infrastructure, but also mission-ready agents," Nielsen said in her speech as she touched on the controversial issue of immigration.

Nielsen then boarded a Coast Guard response ship to watch a tactical demonstration put on by the Coast Guard's elite Maritime Security Response Team.

She will remain in San Diego to join President Trump for his ground tour of the border wall prototypes Tuesday.

Customs And Border Protection Details Reasons For San Diego Border Wall Testing

[KGTU-TV San Diego](#), March 12, 2018

SAN DIEGO (KGTU) – San Diego is playing a pivotal role as a testing ground for the future border wall while the region prepares for President Trump's visit Tuesday.

WHY SAN DIEGO?

The region, specifically Otay Mesa, was selected as a location for the eight prototypes because of site accessibility to construct and the ability to evaluate the wall as part of a larger, existing border infrastructure system, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesman Ralph DeSio.

San Diego County's value as a construction site was detailed in a presentation made by the Department of Homeland Security and obtained by NPR.

CBP officers can compare the performance of the prototypes to underperforming existing materials in the same location, according to the document. The prototypes can also be evaluated for the impact on operations in an existing enforcement zone.

The land where the prototypes are constructed is federally owned, making the project more affordable.

As far as the CBP is concerned, the proof of the border wall's success is in the pudding. A video made by the agency showed an 87 percent reduction in arrests at the border after the creation of a physical barrier.

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE BORDER WALL

San Diego had funds earmarked for border wall construction ahead of the prototype construction. The CBP allocated \$999,000 to replace the primary fence and replace the secondary fence with a wall in the 2017 fiscal year.

Despite the federal green light, the San Diego City Council formally opposed the project.

The group voted to support Councilmember Georgette Gómez's proposal to oppose the Border Wall Funding Act of 2017.

In her resolution, Gómez cited a San Diego Association of Governments and Caltrans study on the economic impacts of border delays on the cross-border economy. The study found the effects of border crossing delays cost \$7.2 billion in foregone gross output and more than 62,000 jobs in both the U.S. and Mexico economies in 2007.

"As a city that is invested in the binational economic development of our region, it is important to oppose the building of a wall and focus our resources in enhancing our border infrastructure to ease access of goods and people," Gómez wrote.

"The border wall is a huge mistake for our region economically and environmentally. I am happy the City Council voted to pass my resolution. Our tax dollars should be spent uplifting the quality of life for all San Diegans, and tackling our issues on road infrastructure, housing, and homelessness," she said.

For the immediate neighbors of the border wall prototypes, the initial impact has been positive.

Otay Pizza manager Wade Aljabi said he's had an increase in business from CBP officers and construction workers.

That might change tomorrow as President Trump's visit leads to road closures just east of his location in a strip mall at SR-905 and Siempre Viva Rd.

"We'll be open 7 to 7," Aljabi said.

Trump Plans To View Wall Prototypes. Here Are Some He Won't See.

By Elizabeth Williamson

New York Times, March 12, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Tuesday is to visit a barren stretch of scrubland in San Diego to view eight attempts at realizing his vision for a "big, beautiful wall." All the prototypes are big. None are beautiful.

The eight stolid slabs awaiting Mr. Trump inside the razor wire in the border neighborhood of Otay Mesa were chosen from numerous proposals (the Department of Homeland Security refused to say how many) submitted to the agency last year. In soliciting ideas, the department said that each prototype would be judged, along with its impenetrability, on "aesthetics and innovative design."

Innovation they got. Among the unsuccessful bidders was Clayton Industries, a Pittsburgh-based outfit that envisioned a 30-foot wall reinforced by sensors, an electrified chain-link fence and a railroad track dumping nuclear waste into a 100-foot deep moat. The waste is used as a power source.

"It wasn't a booby trap," said Chris Clayton, the company's president. "What I was trying to do was to consolidate all the nuclear waste dumps and cesspools that are littered throughout the U.S. Why put up a simple concrete wall across the border when you can serve a couple of other functions? To the general public it might seem a little wild, but I made it to the second round."

Other firms submitted concepts for walls topped by solar panels that would generate power, maybe even to sell, as a tricky way to get Mexico to pay for the wall. One company, National Consulting Service of National City, Calif., envisioned a wall topped by a monorail serving both nations, according to proposal information leaked to the San Diego Union-Tribune. The kicker: The train would feature "voice analysis technology to detect different emotional states of riders to possibly assist law enforcement."

Even further afield were ideas from architects, designers and artists. The idea of a government soliciting bids to build a physical barrier dividing nations ignited fraught conversations among many of them and led to some offbeat ideas. Not your typical government contractors, many did not bother to submit their proposals to Homeland Security but offered them up to the public as statements on the controversial structure. Some saw potential for creating a stirring monument. Others saw a chance to express their revulsion at the entire endeavor.

In the latter category is the "Prison Wall," a proposal for a 2,000-mile, vivid pink wall complex envisioned by Estudio 3.14, a design firm in Guadalajara, Mexico, and the Mamertine Group, a design lab at the University of Connecticut directed by Hassanaly Ladha. Leonardo Diaz Borioli, Estudio 3.14's creative director, rallied students from three Guadalajara architecture schools to come up with a design "inspired by Luis Barragán's pink walls that are emblematic of Mexico." (Mr. Barragán was a renowned 20th-century Mexican architect.)

"It also takes advantage of the tradition in architecture of megalomaniac wall building. Moreover, the wall is not only a wall," said Norberto Miranda, the firm's spokesman. "It is a prison where 11 million undocumented people will be processed, classified, indoctrinated and/or deported." There's also a shopping mall, "with a Macy's, in the Tijuana section," he added.

The project includes mock-ups of an advertising campaign for cheap Mexican labor to build the project, with the headline "You are wanted too!"

Since the pyramids, "architects have always designed for power, and architecture has the capacity to make visual any atrocity," Mr. Diaz Borioli said. "The moment we started to render it, we realized how absurd the whole idea is." After the firm placed its satirical proposal in a couple of design magazines, it circled the world. Videos juxtaposing the rose-colored renderings with Mr. Trump's pro-wall speeches have garnered hundreds of thousands of views. In Mexico, the reception was more muted, Mr. Diaz Borioli said: "It was a little bit too provocative."

The proposal was never a serious one. It's not possible to meet the Department of Homeland Security's "aesthetics" requirement anyway, Mr. Diaz Borioli said. "Infrastructure that has such a perverse objective is difficult to think of as aesthetic," he said. "I'm happy our proposal makes people laugh, because that is what we are left with now."

John Beckmann of the New York architecture and interior design studio Axis Mundi and an anonymous collective, Third Mind Foundation, sponsored an international competition to bring what they called "bold humanitarian solutions, creativity and innovation" to bear on border wall designs.

"I thought, 'If this thing is going to happen, why not try to seek visionary solutions for it?'" Mr. Beckmann said. "In my mind it was an opportunity to do a kind of monumental conceptual sculpture."

Two multiethnic teams tied for the \$5,000 first-place prize. The "Irrigation Wall" is the brainchild of Gautier Piechotta and Wu Di from Paris's École Spéciale d'Architecture. The structure incorporates an elaborate mechanism that draws water from the Gulf of Mexico, the Sea of Cortez and the Pacific Ocean, desalinates it and distributes it along the length of the border. It ignores Mr.

Trump's goal of "ending the illegal flow of drugs, cash, guns and people across our border."

Instead, the designers said, "possible benefits could include revegetation of the desert, creation of agricultural operations on either side of the channel and new bilateral treaty governing the distribution and use of the water between the two countries."

The second winner, "Inflatoborder," does away with the wall entirely as a "fetishized object," according to a proposal submitted by Michelle Stein, a designer based in Charlottesville, Va.; Shannon Ruhl and Donna Ryu, graduate students from the University of Virginia; and a Honduran architectural designer, Rosa Cristina Corrales Rodriguez.

The concept is for "a system of flexible bubbles that perform a variety of functions meant to bring communities on either side of the existing wall together," the proposal said. "Air pressure is adjusted according to need — creating a canopy, for instance, that shelters roadside markets where it runs through agricultural lands, or creating 'play area' enclosures for families and children in densely populated urban centers straddling the border." Try making that out of precast concrete.

Mr. Trump worked with the Department of Homeland Security from the beginning, and "provided D.H.S. explicit guidance on what type of wall that he wants," said Katie Waldman, a department spokeswoman.

During the campaign, Mr. Trump summed up his requirements: "It's going to be a real wall, it's going to be a high wall, it's going to be a beautiful wall, it's going to be a wall that works." But the wall won't be a "real wall" as much as a "border system" — part increased patrols, part monitoring devices, part lighting and part wall. The barriers Mr. Trump will visit on Tuesday would be built only in what are considered suitable areas, not along the entire 2,000-mile border.

Whether Congress will free up the more than \$20 billion that the department estimates the project will cost remains an open question.

Looking at photos of the eight prototypes, Mr. Beckmann said he couldn't imagine how Mr. Trump would choose. "We've reached new heights of absurdity," he said. "Pun intended."

Ahead Of Trump Wall Tour, Little Change On US-Mexico Border

By Elliot Spagat

Associated Press, March 12, 2018

CALEXICO, Calif. (AP) — The daily commute from Mexico to California farms is the same as it was before Donald Trump became president. Hundreds of Mexicans cross the border and line the sidewalks of Calexico's tiny downtown by 4 a.m., napping on cardboard sheets and

blankets or sipping coffee from a 24-hour doughnut shop until buses leave for the fields.

For decades, cross-border commuters have picked lettuce, carrots, broccoli, onions, cauliflower and other vegetables that make California's Imperial Valley "America's Salad Bowl" from December through March. As Trump visits the border Tuesday, the harvest is a reminder of how little has changed despite heated immigration rhetoric in Washington.

Trump will inspect eight prototypes for a future 30-foot border wall that were built in San Diego last fall. He made "a big, beautiful wall" a centerpiece of his campaign and said Mexico would pay for it.

But border barriers extend the same 654 miles (1,046 kilometers) they did under President Barack Obama and so far Trump hasn't gotten Mexico or Congress to pay for a new wall.

Trump also pledged to expand the Border Patrol by 5,000 agents, but staffing fell during his first year in office farther below a congressional mandate because the government has been unable to keep pace with attrition and retirements. There were 19,437 agents at the end of September, down from 19,828 a year earlier.

Tough talk on border and immigration policy from President Trump hasn't stopped the daily migration of hundreds of Mexican workers into California's Imperial Valley. Farmers there say the workers are vital to the region's vegetable harvest. (March 12)

In Tijuana, tens of thousands of commuters still line up weekday mornings for San Diego at the nation's busiest border crossing, some for jobs in landscaping, housekeeping, hotel maids and shipyard maintenance. The vast majority are U.S. citizens and legal residents or holders of "border crossing cards" that are given to millions of Mexicans in border areas for short visits. The border crossing cards do not include work authorization but some break the rules.

Even concern about Trump's threat to end the North American Free Trade Agreement is tempered by awareness that border economies have been integrated for decades. Mexican "maquiladora" plants, which assemble duty-free raw materials for export to the U.S., have made televisions, medical supplies and other goods since the 1960s.

"How do you separate twins that are joined at the hip?" said Paola Avila, chairwoman of the Border Trade Alliance, a group that includes local governments and business chambers. "Our business relationships will continue to grow regardless of what happens with NAFTA."

Workers in the Mexicali area rise about 1 a.m., carpool to the border crossing and wait about an hour to reach Calexico's portico-covered sidewalks by 4 a.m. Some beat the border bottleneck by crossing at midnight to sleep in their cars in Calexico, a city of 40,000 about 120 miles (192 kilometers) east of San Diego.

Fewer workers make the trek now than 20 and 30 years ago. But not because of Trump.

Steve Scaroni, one of Imperial Valley's largest labor contractors, blames the drop on lack of interest among younger Mexicans, which has forced him to rely increasingly on short-term farmworker visas known as H-2As.

"We have a saying that no one is raising their kids to be farmworkers," said Scaroni, 55, a third-generation grower and one of Imperial Valley's largest labor contractors. Last week, he had two or three buses of workers leaving Calexico before dawn, compared to 15 to 20 buses during the 1980s and 1990s.

Crop pickers at Scaroni's Fresh Harvest Inc. make \$13.18 an hour but H-2As bring his cost to \$20 to \$30 an hour because he must pay for round-trip transportation, sometimes to southern Mexico, and housing. The daily border commuters from Mexicali cost only \$16 to \$18 after overhead.

Scaroni's main objective is to expand the H-2A visa program, which covered about 165,000 workers in 2016. On his annual visit to Washington in February to meet members of Congress and other officials, he decided within two hours that nothing changed under Trump.

"Washington is not going to fix anything," he said. "You've got too many people – lobbyists, politicians, attorneys – who make money off the dysfunction. They make money off of not solving problems. They just keep talking about it."

Jose Angel Valenzuela, who owns a house in Mexicali and is working his second harvest in Imperial Valley, earns more picking cabbage in an hour than he did in a day at a factory in Mexico. He doesn't pay much attention to news and isn't following developments on the border wall.

"We're doing very well," he said as workers passed around beef tacos during a break. "We haven't seen any noticeable change."

Jack Vessey, whose family farms about 10,000 acres in Imperial Valley, relies on border commuters for about half of his workforce. Imperial has only 175,000 people and Mexicali has about 1 million, making Mexico an obvious labor pool.

Vessey, 42, said he has seen no change on the border and doesn't expect much. He figures 10 percent of Congress embraces open immigration policies, another 10 percent oppose them and the other 80 percent don't want to touch it because their voters are too divided.

"It's like banging your head against the wall," he said.

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Border Wall Would Pay For Itself By Cutting Welfare Use By Illegal Immigrants

By Will Racke

Daily Caller, March 12, 2018

President Donald Trump has repeatedly said Mexico would foot the bill for his proposed wall along the southwest border, but the barrier could end up paying for itself by saving the U.S. treasury billions in welfare payments.

Estimates for building a solid physical barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border range from \$18 to \$25 billion, depending on the type and distance of the wall. Once constructed, though, the barrier would save several times that amount by reducing the number of illegal border crossers who end up on welfare rolls, according to Steven Camarota, the research director at the Center for Immigration Studies.

"The wall could pay for itself even if it only modestly reduced illegal crossings and drug smuggling," he told the *New York Post*.

Camarota crunched the numbers and found that if the border wall cut an expected 1.7 million illegal crossings by 200,000 — about 12 percent — over a decade, it would pay for itself in fiscal savings from welfare, public education, tax credits and other benefits available to low-income, illegal immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

At the higher end of effectiveness, if a wall stopped 50 percent of those expected crossings in the next 10 years, it would save \$64 billion — nearly four times the cost of the wall — in welfare and social spending alone.

That's because, despite a prohibition on illegal immigrants using federal welfare, the majority of households headed by illegal immigrants are on welfare through their children. U.S. Census Bureau surveys show that about 62 percent of all illegal immigrant-headed households use at least one federal welfare program, according to a 2015 CIS report authored by Camarota.

Use of Medicaid is especially high — about half of all illegal-immigrant households use federal programs that pay for the hospital bills of poorer Americans. That figure jumps to 72 percent for illegal immigrant households with children.

Many illegal immigrants also receive refundable tax credits for their U.S.-born children because the IRS requires a filer only to show a taxpayer identification number to receive the child tax credit. That interpretation translates to a huge subsidy: In 2013, 4.4 million filers using a taxpayer identification number claimed child tax credits worth \$6 billion, according to a 2013 GAO report.

Some border security experts say access to welfare and tax credits is a powerful magnet for illegal immigration. A wall along the southwest border would go a long way toward deterring those looking to cross into the U.S. illegally to take advantage of welfare programs, explained Brandon Judd, president of the National Border Patrol Council.

"When you look at what a wall will do in allowing us to apprehend the vast majority of those individuals that are coming across the border, it will cut down on how much the

taxpayer burden will be, which then will go straight into funding the wall," he told *Fox & Friends* on Monday.

The Department of Homeland Security has not yet developed an effective way to measure precisely how effective walls are at countering illegal immigration, but previous examples of border barriers have proven to work where they have been built.

A 2006 Congressional Research Service analysis of the southern border found that a fence in the San Diego sector, combined with an increase in agents and other resources, caused apprehensions in the sector to decline by 76 percent over a 12-year period from 1992 to 2004. In El Paso, a two-story corrugated metal fence first erected under the Bush administration reduced illegal border crossings in the area by 89 percent from 2006 to 2012, reports the *New York Post*.

Walls Work, Trump Officials Say, But They're Not Sure To What Extent That's True

By Nick Miroff

Washington Post, March 11, 2018

More than a year after the government's top oversight body urged the Department of Homeland Security to develop a way to measure the effectiveness of fencing and barriers along the border with Mexico, DHS has no such tool ready, even as President Trump prepares to pick the winning designs for his \$18 billion border wall.

Trump officials in recent weeks have dismissed criticism of their border security plan with a well-established defensive principle and simple retort: "Walls work."

But a February 2017 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found DHS has no way to measure how well they work, where they work best or whether less-expensive alternatives could be just as effective.

Despite the assumption that illegal traffic enters through areas where fencing is absent, the report identified several sectors where more arrests occur in locations that have existing barriers.

U.S. border agents collect "geotag" data, electronic markers that assign geographic locations, to map illegal crossings and arrests. But DHS has no means to gauge the extent to which those incursions are impeded by "tactical infrastructure," the report noted, undermining the agency's ability to avoid wasteful spending.

"An assessment of border fencing's contributions to border security operations could help position [U.S. Customs and Border Protection] to identify the cost effectiveness of border fencing compared to other assets the agency deploys," the report said.

DHS officials said last week they are working with the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory to develop such an evaluation system, and it may be ready later this year.

President Trump is moving forward anyway. His public statements have demonstrated a keen interest in the aesthetic properties of the wall, along with its height. His administration has budgeted \$1.6 billion for wall construction this year.

Trump is scheduled to travel to San Diego on Tuesday to view eight prototypes and likely announce one or more winning designs. The trip will be Trump's first as president to California, a state his administration is suing for refusing to assist with federal immigration enforcement.

Trump's wall-building plan — stalled in Congress — would spend \$18 billion over 10 years to add 316 miles of new barriers and replace aging fencing along another 407 miles.

The 30-foot steel and concrete prototypes showcased in San Diego are far taller and more formidable than anything in place along the border. They extend six feet underground to deter burrowing and feature an array of anti-climbing configurations. One is crenelated with metal spikes.

DHS officials say their testing teams found the structures exceedingly difficult to scale or break through. The prototypes cost as much as \$486,000 each to build, and DHS has not said if the \$18 billion overall cost projection is based on one or several of those designs.

Instead, DHS officials have defended the expenditure by pointing to major decreases in arrests for illegal crossings in areas where tougher fencing was installed. In a new promotional video titled "Walls Work," CBP said illegal traffic dropped 87 percent in San Diego after its two-layered barrier system was installed.

"Border walls have proven to be extremely effective in preventing the flow of drugs and illegal aliens across our borders," DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said in a statement this month, after a court victory allowing Homeland Security officials to move forward with fast-track construction plans. "Simply put — walls work," she said.

But when the independent, nonpartisan GAO launched its study in 2015, it determined that the efficacy of walls and fencing varies widely across the 2,000-mile border, depending on a range of factors that include topography, proximity to urban areas and the ancillary presence of tools such as cameras, sensors and enforcement agents.

GAO researchers analyzed the location of illegal entries between 2013 and 2015 and found sectors of the border in California, New Mexico and other areas where more arrests occurred in places that already have fencing. In southern Arizona, about half of the illegal "drive-throughs" by unauthorized vehicles occurred in places with barriers to prevent exactly that.

Some of the most robust fencing along the border has been installed in urban and semi-urban areas adjacent to U.S. border cities such as Calexico, Calif., Nogales, Ariz., and El Paso. But those who illegally cross the border sometimes

prefer those areas because they can quickly blend into urban surroundings if they manage to get through.

DHS officials recorded 9,287 breaches of border fencing between 2010 and 2015 in areas with "pedestrian" barriers that are designed to be more forbidding than "vehicle" fencing. Areas with older "legacy" fencing were nearly six times more likely to be breached, the GAO report noted, and presumably many of those sections will be first to be replaced by the taller and tougher ramparts on display in San Diego.

Tougher fortifications help channel illegal traffic toward more remote, isolated areas away from U.S. cities and highways, DHS officials say, giving agents more time to catch up to illegal entrants when ground sensors and aerial surveillance tools detect suspicious activity.

"Infrastructure on the U.S. side is a key factor that determines how easy it is to get from the border to being able to disappear into a vehicle or into a city, and that affects how much time we have to respond," DHS statistician Marc Rosenblum said.

Critics of the president's border security plans say their concerns have less to do with the physics of huge walls than with the fiscal prudence of building them at a time of ballooning deficits.

"We're spending money like a drunken sailor," said Sen. Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.), a former naval officer and one of the members of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that commissioned the GAO report. "We cannot continue to waste money, so we need to find out what works and what doesn't."

Trump campaigned on a promise to build a border wall and oblige Mexico to pay for it. Top DHS officials in the Trump administration praise the proposal.

But before Trump's presidential run, Border Patrol agents and officials did not say they wanted a wall, Carper said. Instead, they have long emphasized a flexible "layered" approach combining barriers, technology and personnel in configurations that can adapt to changing security needs.

"It's no one thing," Carper said. "It's a combination."

In an interview, the head of the Border Patrol's Strategic Planning and Analysis Directorate, Benjamin "Carry" Huffman, said after a career in the agency he doesn't need a yardstick to know that walls and fencing are effective.

"Having done this for 33 years, I can tell you a wall is essential in gaining operational control capability," Huffman said. "And having worked the border with a wall and without it, I can say you want to work the border with it."

Look at San Diego, Huffman continued. "It's a pleasant place to be, one of the finest cities in America. In 1985 it was quite a different place. You had 1.6 million people coming across the southern border. . . . South San Diego was practically uninhabitable. Property values were in the tank," he said.

"Fast forward a few years and we started adding this infrastructure," Huffman continued, describing the addition of new primary fencing backed by another "secondary" fence with Border Patrol roadway in between, creating a no-man's land where illegal crossers could be trapped.

"We changed the whole environment in that area," said Huffman. "The U.S. government literally made millionaires and billionaires down there. They had property that was practically unusable, and it changed dramatically."

Last year the number of people arrested along the border with Mexico dropped to a 49-year low, and Trump has touted the decline as proof his border security strategies are working.

But illegal crossings have been falling for most of the past decade, and migration experts say tougher border security is only one of several factors. Birthrates in Mexico have plunged since the 1960s, leaving the country with far fewer unemployed young people, while the domestic labor demands of Mexican manufacturing have grown.

Today the majority of unauthorized border crossers are from Central America, not Mexico, including many families and unaccompanied minors who turn themselves in to U.S. agents to request asylum, citing threats of chronic gang violence back home.

Most of the Central American migrants cross the Rio Grande in South Texas. DHS officials have prioritized that area for a surge of new wall construction along the winding riverbanks.

DHS NEWS

DHS Creates Committee To Boost School Safety Efforts

Washington Examiner, March 12, 2018

The Department of Homeland Security on Monday announced the creation of a steering committee that will be tasked with finding ways to improve security in schools around the country.

DHS is already providing training on a range of topics, like security awareness, emergency planning, active shooter awareness, mass casualty incident response, and how to spot suspicious behavior. DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said the steering committee would make sure all relevant national security agencies are working with state and local officials to ensure school safety.

"While state and local partners have primary responsibility for the physical security at schools, through trainings, best practices guides, workshops, and tabletop exercises, we hope to improve awareness and foster a culture of preparedness. We are working with partners around the country to harden these vulnerable targets," DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said in a statement Monday

morning. "By ensuring administrators and stakeholders in the K-12 and higher education communities, teachers, parents, law enforcement, and first responders are part of this effort, we can better educate the entire community on threats to school safety."

The department is currently working with the FBI on a School Attack Research study that looks at specific incidents in which a current or former student attacked his or her school. The study's findings will be turned into a guide for school personnel, law enforcement, and other community officials that will help officials flag concerning behavior before the person can carry out an attack.

DHS will continue to offer "capacity" training, or courses that educate school officials on how to plan for emergencies, respond to mass casualty incidents, and handle suspicious behavior. The programs are available online, on-site at the Emergency Management Institute, and by select local officials.

In addition, DHS said local community leaders should take advantage of federal grant money that can go toward pre-attack planning and initial response efforts to incidents.

DHS touted a handful of sub-organizations that are available to work with local and state officials during this process, including the Hometown Security Program, Youth Preparedness Council, Protective Security Advisors, Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council, and Campus Resilience Program.

The department is also preparing to roll out a national public awareness campaign similar to the "See Something, Say Something" strategy. The new campaign is aimed at educating students, school staff, and other community members on how to warn law enforcement and intelligence officials of suspicious individuals.

"The public is often our greatest partner in identifying suspicious activity, and we are strengthening public awareness campaigns to encourage everyone—students, teachers, and their communities—to report suspicious school-related activity to local law enforcement," Nielsen said.

Department Of Homeland Security Committee Strives To Enhance Sch

By Zack Briggs

KVOA-TV Tucson (AZ), March 12, 2018

The Department of Homeland Security announced the creation of a new committee Monday to focus on ways of improving school safety across the nation.

DHS's amped-up efforts to protect schools from gun violence, comes in response to the high school shooting in Parkland, Florida, which left 17 people dead.

"No child should to worry about their safety when in school," said DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. "The Department's top priority is to keep the American people safe,

and we are closely examining ways to better protect our nation's students and schools from gun violence."

The committee will coordinate with first responders, politicians, educators and community members throughout the country on the issue of enhancing school safety.

Public awareness serves as a primary piece to the overall goal.

DHS is coming up with a campaign in which students, staff and communities are encouraged to report suspicious activity.

The Department is in the midst of devising an operational guide, which will give educators and law enforcement (among other entities), outlines procedures on creating threat assessment teams and forming management strategies for decreasing chances of targeted attack.

President Donald Trump has expressed desire to arm teachers and improve background checks for individuals purchasing guns.

To learn more about DHS's programs: <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2018/03/12/dhs-working-enhance-school-safety-increase-preparedness#>

BORDER SECURITY

U.S. May Lift Ban On Travelers From Chad, Tillerson Says

By Gardiner Harris

New York Times, March 12, 2018

ABUJA, Nigeria — The Trump administration might remove Chad from the list of countries whose citizens face severe restrictions on visiting the United States, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson said Monday on the last day of his African tour.

The decision could defuse the outrage and shock that followed the decision in September to include Chad on the travel restrictions list, which includes North Korea, Iran and Venezuela.

"First, I wanted to ensure that the people of Chad understand that they're welcome in the United States," Mr. Tillerson said, although in fact most Chadians now find it almost impossible to visit. "The steps that have been taken are necessary because of all the conflicts that exist on Chad's borders."

Chad's foreign minister, Mahamat Zene Cherif, called the country's placement on the list "an injustice done to Chad," and said that Chad's president, Idriss Déby, had "expressed his incomprehension" to Mr. Tillerson about the restrictions.

In President Trump's executive order, the White House praised Chad for being an important partner in counterterrorism operations in Africa, but it added that "Chad

does not adequately share public safety and terrorism-related information."

Mr. Tillerson said that Chad's efforts to strengthen its passport control and improve the sharing of information with the United States about potential terrorist threats might result in Chad's being removed from the list, adding, "We're hopeful that we can return things to normalization."

He did not offer a precise time frame, though, saying that a report would be completed by the end of the month and discussions at the White House would begin in April.

The visit to Chad, part of Mr. Tillerson's five-nation tour of Africa, was underwhelming because he got sick partway through, had a light schedule of events anyway and then decided to head back to Washington a day earlier than expected, cramming visits to Chad and Nigeria into a single day.

Mr. Tillerson decided to slice a day off the weeklong trip so that he could help plan a possible meeting between President Trump and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un.

His exhaustion quickly became evident as he tried to keep up his official schedule while participating in crucial phone calls with the White House on Mr. Trump's decision to negotiate directly with the North Korean leader — a decision that Mr. Trump appears to have made on the spur of the moment, taking both his aides and South Korean diplomats by surprise.

With much still unknown about the summit meeting, Mr. Tillerson said Monday during a news conference in Nigeria that planning was in "very early stages."

"We've not heard anything directly back from North Korea, although we expect to hear something directly from them," he said. "So I know those are all question that people are anxious to have answers to. I would say just remain patient and we'll see what happens."

Once the two sides begin talking, several steps will be needed to agree on the location and topic of talks, he said. And the administration may not announce the results of such talks too quickly, he said.

"I think it's going to be very important that those kinds of conversations are held quietly through the two parties," he said.

U.S. Could Lift Travel Ban On 'Important Partner' Chad: Tillerson

Reuters, March 12, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Tillerson Visits Chad And Gets An Earful About US Travel Ban

By Josh Lederman

Associated Press, March 12, 2018

N'DJAMENA, Chad (AP) — On an unlikely visit to dusty and desolate Chad, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Monday told the African nation's citizens they're welcome in the United States. It wasn't enough to overcome a Trump administration travel ban that Chad's top diplomat declared an injustice.

Tillerson's message of growing U.S. cooperation with Chad, a key counterterrorism partner, was overshadowed by palpable hurt and resentment over Chad's position on an inglorious list that includes North Korea, Iran and Venezuela. Tillerson, who became the most senior U.S. official to set foot in Chad, expressed hope the restrictions will be lifted.

"The placement of Chad in this list was an injustice done to Chad," Foreign Minister Mahamat Zene Cherif said. He said Chadian President Idriss Deby had "expressed his incomprehension" to Tillerson about the restrictions.

In Trump's most recent set of travel restrictions issued in September, Chad landed on the visa ban list thanks to an office supply glitch that prevented the country from supplying Homeland Security officials with recent samples of its passports. The Associated Press has reported. There were other technicalities, too, including Chad's inability to adequately share public safety and terrorism-related information with U.S. officials who screen foreigners seeking visas to enter the U.S.

At the time, Trump national security adviser H.R. McMaster said Chad could be off the list "maybe in a couple of months." In December, a U.S. team traveled to Chad to work with local officials on outstanding problems. And in the months since, the U.S. has repeatedly praised Chad's efforts to improve its compliance with U.S. requirements.

The Supreme Court is expected to decide the legality of Trump's travel bans in the coming months. In December, the high court said the latest version of ban could be fully enforced while appeals make their way through the courts.

Questioned repeatedly by the local Chadian media about why it remains on the list, Tillerson said the visa restrictions were necessary "because of all the conflict that exists on Chad's borders," even as he gave the country credit for "many, many important positive steps" to comply. He said the United States later this month would prepare a report on Chad's progress that Trump would review in April.

"These steps I think are going to allow us to begin to normalize the travel relationship with Chad," Tillerson said. But, he added, "We have to wait for the final report."

Still, that's no reason why the two countries can't continue working closely together to fight growing threats to Africa's Sahel region posed by al-Qaida affiliates like Boko Haram and the newly designated West Africa wing of the Islamic State group, Tillerson and Chad's foreign minister said.

As the U.S. and its partners near a defeat of IS in Iraq and Syria, concern is mounting about the extremist group's spread to other parts of the world, including Africa and Southeast Asia. Chad, with its long border with Libya and proximity to Nigeria and Mali, is particularly affected by the threat of instability and extremism in the region.

In October, shortly after the U.S. slapped the visa restrictions in Chad, Tillerson's State Department announced a \$60 million pledge to a newly formed "G5 Sahel" regional security force that aims to counter IS and other extremist groups. The United States has also sought to assist another regional campaign, the Multinational Joint Task Force, that includes Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon and Niger.

The U.S. has been vocal in its praise for Chad's efforts on counterterrorism. The country is known to have one of the strongest and most effective militaries in Africa and has been a driving force behind the new G5 Sahel unit.

So Chad's leaders felt blindsided when Trump added their citizens to the travel restrictions list, lumping Chad together with U.S. enemies like North Korea. Especially bruising was that Trump's reasoning relied on a strict and literal interpretation of new Homeland Security requirements that seemed to elevate form over the substance of the U.S.-Chad relationship.

A key reason Chad landed on the list: It ran out of passport paper, and couldn't provide the U.S. Homeland Security Department with a recent sample of its passports. Although Chad offered pre-existing samples of its passports, it wasn't good enough for the U.S., Trump administration officials said at the time.

The Chad issue has emerged as a sore point between the State Department and Homeland Security, exposing fault lines within Trump's administration. Emphasizing the strategic U.S. interest in maintaining close ties, the State Department and the Pentagon didn't want Chad on the list in the first place and have argued for its removal. Homeland Security has insisted nothing can be done until the review of Chad's progress is complete.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

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U.S. Customs And Border Protection Warns Consumers About Counterfeit Products

By William Axford

Houston Chronicle, March 12, 2018

Federal officials are warning international passengers to refrain from purchasing counterfeit goods while traveling

abroad, as the fake products may potentially have health risks and fund criminal enterprises.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection reports that, in conjunction with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, agents seized 34,143 shipments of goods that violated intellectual property rights for fiscal year 2017. That's an 8 percent increase over fiscal year 2016.

DANGEROUS AMERICA: The most dangerous U.S. city isn't Chicago – or any other big city you'd expect

The total estimated manufacturers' suggested retail price of the counterfeit goods would have been more than \$1.2 billion had the products been genuine.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection warns that counterfeit products can pose health and safety issues. As the agency puts it, "Counterfeiters don't care about your well-being. They just want to make a profit." The top three categories of counterfeit items that may pose health and safety risks were personal care, pharmaceuticals and consumer electronics.

BEWARE: State Department warns of dangerous Mexico spring break destinations

The top products seized by the agency are apparel and accessories (20 percent of counterfeit products recovered), consumer electronics (16 percent), footwear (12 percent), watches and jewelry (11 percent), and handbags and wallets (10 percent).

Agents also want to remind people that it's illegal to purchase counterfeit goods. "Bringing (counterfeit goods) into the United States may result in civil or criminal penalties," U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a release. "Purchasing counterfeit goods supports criminal activities such as money laundering and trafficking in illegal guns and drugs. Remember, if it seems like a steal, it is."

Will Axford is a digital reporter for Chron.com. Read more of his stories here and follow him on Twitter.

Drug Dog Sniffs Out \$3.9M In Liquid Meth At Texas-Mexico Border

By Claire Z. Cardona

Dallas Morning News, March 12, 2018

Joep, a drug-sniffing dog, alerted U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers about 1 p.m. to the smell of narcotics coming from a 1989 Chevrolet 1500 pickup at the Paso Del Norte international crossing from Mexico, officials said.

Officers working at the El Paso port of entry found six containers in the gas compartment that had a total of 164.5 pounds of liquid meth. The drugs have a street value of about \$3,948,000, officials said.

Former Texas teacher arrested at border on charge of improper relationship with student

"Smugglers spent considerable time and effort to conceal this liquid meth load," Beverly Good, customs director of the El Paso Port said in a written statement.

The driver, a 37-year-old man from Hermosillo, Sonora, in Mexico was arrested. He was turned over to special agents with Homeland Security Investigations to face charges, officials said.

AVIATION SECURITY

Trump Budget Calls For CT Scanners To Check Carry-on Luggage – Possibly Cutting Airport Wait Times

AviationPros, March 12, 2018

March 10--President Trump's budget for fiscal year 2019 has yet to win congressional approval but one of the president's top security chiefs already is touting a portion of the spending plan that could speed up airport screening across the country.

At a conference on security this week, Transportation Security Administration Administrator David Pekoske praised a budget request to spend nearly \$71 million to purchase 145 new airport scanners that rely on computed tomography to check carry-on bags.

Computed tomography scanners, also known as CT scanners, have long been used for medical imaging and also are installed at airports to screen checked luggage. But they have only recently been scaled down to a size that can be used for carry-on luggage.

During a speech at the George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security, Pekoske said the scanner can view the contents of a bag in three dimensions, allowing security officers to flip the image on the screen 360 degrees.

"This CT technology goes from a two-dimensional view to a three-dimensional view so the officers can move [the image] around and they can slice it," he said. "You are going to get a much better view."

The technology could speed up the screening process by allowing passengers to leave all items, including laptop computers and liquids, in the bag. Testing on carry-on luggage has already begun.

"I'm really excited about that program and I think it's going to make a huge difference at our checkpoints," Pekoske said.

But to help pay for the new technology, the proposed budget calls for raising the passenger security fee charged to all fliers by \$1 per one-way trip next year and \$1.65 in 2020, raising the total fee in 2020 to \$8.25 per one-way ticket.

The same budget proposal calls for a nearly \$2 increase to two separate fees charged by U.S. Customs and

Border Protection on travelers entering the country via boat or airplane.

Questions For TSA After Reports Of Laptop And Phone Searches On Domestic Flights

Exclusive: growing number of reports raises concerns US government may be increasing surveillance and privacy violations at airports

By Sam Levin

The Guardian (UK), March 12, 2018

There are a growing number of reports of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) searching the electronic devices of passengers on domestic flights in the US, according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which has sued the federal agency for records.

The ACLU Foundation of Northern California filed a lawsuit against the TSA on Monday demanding that the government disclose its policies for searching the computers and cellphones of domestic travelers, arguing that anecdotal accounts have raised concerns about potential privacy invasions.

"We've received reports of passengers on purely domestic flights having their phones and laptops searched, and the takeaway is that TSA has been taking these items from people without providing any reason why," the staff attorney Vasudha Talla told the Guardian. "The search of an electronic device has the potential to be highly invasive and cover the most personal details about a person."

A TSA spokesman, Matt Leas, declined to comment on the lawsuit but said: "TSA does not search the contents of electronic devices."

Over the past year, civil liberties groups have repeatedly raised concerns about US border agents expanding the invasive searches of international travelers' phones. Some travelers reported authorities demanding they unlock their devices and allow officials to review text messages, social media accounts, photos and other private information – without warrants or reasonable suspicion. Now, there are questions about whether similar practices could be happening for passengers traveling within the US, raising fears that the government may be increasing surveillance and privacy violations at airports.

"It speaks to a growing attempt by the government to investigate individuals not based on probable cause or reasonable suspicion, but perhaps based on impermissible factors," said Talla.

The ACLU of Northern California had not previously received reports of these kinds of domestic searches, but recently learned of a handful of cases, said Talla, who said the ACLU did not have specific data to share.

There are no clear patterns in the searches that people have described to the ACLU, though in each case, the TSA

has not explained its justification to passengers, who have typically experienced the searches while going through security before boarding flights, Talla said. The ACLU in California has not heard of specific cases of the TSA requiring domestic fliers to unlock their devices, but last year, numerous reports emerged that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) would not let travelers enter the US without granting the agents access to devices.

When devices are unlocked, "they are really able to access a person's entire life that is on the phone as well as using the device to access what is on the cloud", Talla said.

One woman who shared her story with the ACLU told the Guardian that in the last year, she had twice had her electronics searched while flying within California. The 64-year-old, who works in the not-for-profit sector and requested anonymity for fear that she could face further scrutiny from TSA, said that on one occasion last year, TSA agents pulled her aside to pat her down multiple times and eventually asked to see both her iPhones – a work and personal one.

The agents did not ask her to unlock the phones, but took them for at least 10 minutes out of her view, she said, adding that she quickly became distraught.

"I no longer had my phones, so there was no one I could contact," she said, adding, "It just feels like an invasion of privacy, especially when they are not telling you what the problem is."

The woman said on a recent trip, the TSA also briefly took her laptop, which was password protected.

"If somebody is suspecting you of doing something wrong or some kind of crime, you should be told what it is. You should be able to defend yourself," she added.

Under Donald Trump, Border Patrol has escalated its searches in areas far from the border. CBP has also claimed it has the authority to conduct warrantless searches of electronic devices at international border crossings, without probable cause, sparking an ACLU challenge.

In 2015, CBP conducted 5,000 searches of electronic devices in airports – a number that increased to 30,000 searches last year, the ACLU noted.

In October 2017, the TSA announced it would be heightening screening procedures of domestic passengers' devices, including tablets and e-readers, but it has not released any policies or procedures governing these searches, the ACLU said.

The ACLU said it had received no response to its public records requests sent in December 2017, forcing the group to file the lawsuit, which is seeking fairly basic policy documents.

Leas said he could not comment on whether there was a formal TSA policy for searches of electronics.

Talla said: "These are materials that should not be terribly difficult to track down," adding: "We're just not clear what they're doing and why they're doing it."

If you have stories of government searches of electronic devices at airports, contact sam.levin@theguardian.com

ACLU Sues TSA Over Electronic Device Searches

By Megan Rose Dickey

TechCrunch, March 12, 2018

The American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California has filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the Transportation Security Administration over its alleged practices of searching the electronic devices of passengers traveling on domestic flights.

"The federal government's policies on searching the phones, laptops, and tablets of domestic air passengers remain shrouded in secrecy," ACLU Foundation of Northern California attorney Vasudha Talla said in a blog post.

The lawsuit, which is directed toward the TSA field offices in San Francisco and its headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, specifically asks the TSA to hand over records related to its policies, procedures and/or protocols pertaining to the search of electronic devices.

This lawsuit comes after a number of reports came in pertaining to the searches of electronic devices of passengers traveling domestically. The ACLU also wants to know what equipment the TSA uses to search, examine and extract any data from passengers' devices, as well as what kind of training TSA officers receive around screening and searching the devices.

"TSA is searching the electronic devices of domestic passengers, but without offering any reason for the search," Talla added. "We don't know why the government is singling out some passengers, and we don't know what exactly TSA is searching on the devices. Our phones and laptops contain very personal information, and the federal government should not be digging through our digital data without a warrant."

The ACLU says it first filed FOIA requests back in December, but TSA "subsequently improperly withheld the requested records," the ACLU wrote in a blog post today.

Although the TSA did announce heightened screening procedures in October 2017, it did not provide any information about its policies or procedures. TSA does, however, have public policies pertaining to the search and seizure of electronic devices at the border and during international trips. That practice, however, is also being challenged by the ACLU in court.

I've reached out to the TSA and will update this story if I hear back.

TSA 'Fast-track' Hiring Event At PDX For Security Officers

KGW-TV Portland (OR), March 12, 2018

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Transportation Security Administration is holding a fast-track hiring event Tuesday for full- and part-time officers to work at Portland International Airport.

The event is located at the Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel. Information sessions will begin at 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Applicants will need to bring two forms of federal identification.

Starting pay for a transportation security officer at PDX is \$16.60 per hour.

During each session, TSA officials will discuss an officer's duties and the application process. They will also discuss benefits.

Attendees will be able to apply for the positions at the hotel. Following the information sessions, people who are interested will be able to take a computer-based aptitude test, participate in an interview, and schedule a drug screening and medical exam.

Rapper Juelz Santana To Appear In Court Monday Afternoon On Weapons, Drug Charges

By Kaitlyn Kanzler, Keldy Ortiz And Abbott Koloff

USA Today, March 12, 2018

Rapper Juelz Santana turned himself into Port Authority Police at about 1 a.m. Monday after fleeing Newark Liberty Airport on Friday after a gun was allegedly found in his carry on.

Santana, whose birth name is LaRon James, is facing weapons and drug charges as well as a unspecified warrant. He is expected to appear Monday at 2 p.m. in federal court in Newark, the US Attorney General's office said.

In an email, the Transportation Security Administration said one of its officers "froze the bag safely inside the X-Ray tunnel" after spotting the gun during routine screening.

"Upon our discovery of the firearm, the individual left the checkpoint and went back into the public area," leaving the carry-on bag containing the gun at the checkpoint, the TSA said in the email.

The Port Authority issued a statement saying that "a passenger walked out the exit of the C-1 security checkpoint at Newark Airport" on Friday night, leaving behind two bags. They said authorities recovered a loaded Derringer .38-caliber handgun and that the suspect "is believed to have left Newark Airport by taxicab."

Santana has been convicted of three indictable offenses from three different incidents in 2011, according to court records. These convictions make it illegal for him to be in possession of a gun.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Immigrants Sue US Over End To Temporary Protected Status

Associated Press, March 12, 2018

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) – The Trump administration's decision to end a program that lets immigrants from four countries live and work legally in the U.S. was motivated by racism and leaves the immigrants' American born children with an "impossible choice," according to a federal lawsuit filed on Monday.

Nine immigrants and five children filed the suit in federal court in San Francisco to reinstate temporary protected status for people from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan.

The status is granted to countries ravaged by natural disasters or war. It lets citizens of those countries remain in the U.S. until the situation improves back home.

The lawsuit – at least the third challenging the administration's decision to end temporary protected status – cites President Donald Trump's vulgar language during a meeting in January to describe African countries.

"They did it because of xenophobia, and we need to make sure that we say it loudly so that everyone knows," said Martha Arevalo, executive director of the immigrant advocacy group, Central American Resource Center.

Arevalo spoke at a rally to announce the lawsuit outside the federal courthouse in San Francisco that was attended by some of the plaintiffs and dozens of demonstrators, some carrying signs that read, "Let Our People Stay."

One of the plaintiffs, Cristina Morales, said she came to the U.S. in 1993 at the age of 12 after fleeing El Salvador to escape domestic violence. She received temporary protected status in 2001 and now works as an after-school teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area.

She was accompanied at the rally by her 14-year-old daughter, Crista Ramos, who along with her 11-year-old son, Diego Ramos, are U.S. citizens.

"I don't want the government to split my family and to lose my home, my friends and the opportunity for a good education," Crista said.

Morales, 37, her voice quivering with emotion, said she has nothing to go back to in El Salvador.

"If I pay taxes, health insurance, my house and the education of my children, what I have done wrong," she said.

The lawsuit names the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as a defendant. The department declined to comment on pending litigation.

More than 200,000 immigrants could face deportation because of the change in policy, and they have more than 200,000 American children who risk being uprooted from their communities and schools, according to plaintiffs in the case

filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California and other immigrant advocates.

The children face the "impossible choice" of leaving their country with their parents or staying without them, according to the suit.

"These American children should not have to choose between their country and their family," Ahilan Arulanantham, advocacy and legal director of the ACLU of Southern California, said in a statement.

It's the latest lawsuit filed against the Trump administration over its crackdown on immigration. A case filed last month by Haitian and Salvadoran immigrants in Massachusetts also alleges the decision to end temporary protected status was racially motivated. The NAACP has filed a separate lawsuit in Maryland on behalf of Haitian immigrants who received temporary protected status.

The program was created for humanitarian reasons, and the status can be renewed by the U.S. government following an evaluation.

El Salvador was designated for the program in 2001 after an earthquake and the country's status was repeatedly renewed. The Trump administration announced in January that the program would expire for El Salvador in September 2019.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen concluded that El Salvador had received significant international aid to recover from the earthquake, and homes, schools and hospitals there had been rebuilt.

The Trump administration has ended the program for the other three countries as well.

The lawsuit in California alleges that the U.S. narrowed its criteria for determining whether countries qualified for temporary protected status and is violating the constitutional rights of people with temporary protected status and their U.S. citizen children.

The lawsuit seeks a court order to reinstate temporary protected status for people from the four countries, but it also proposes an alternative that would protect recipients with school-aged U.S. citizen children for as long as the children remain between five and 18 years old.

Taxin reported from Santa Ana, California.

Published: March 12, 2018 — 3:01 AM EDT | Updated: March 12, 2018 — 6:50 PM EDT

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Trump's Decision To Deport 200,000 To His 'Shithole Countries' Challenged In Lawsuit

Administration recently terminated temporary protected status for all individuals from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan

By David Smith In Washington

The Guardian (UK), March 12, 2018

A lawsuit is being filed on Monday to overturn Donald Trump's decision to end immigration protections for more than 200,000 people from four Central American and African nations the president reportedly called "shithole countries".

The legal action is the first to challenge the terminations on behalf of the American children of temporary protected status (TPS) holders, and the first to challenge all four TPS terminations imposed by the White House.

TPS is an immigration status granted to certain countries experiencing dire conditions such as an armed conflict, epidemic or natural disaster, and protects individuals from deportation and authorizes them to work in America for extended periods.

But the Trump administration recently adopted a far narrower interpretation of the federal law governing TPS, then used it to terminate TPS status for all individuals from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan.

Salvadorans make up about two thirds of the total beneficiaries. In January, the Department of Homeland Security said it cancelled TPS for them because the dangerous conditions created by earthquakes in 2001, which killed more than a thousand people, no longer exist. The country has rebuilt from the damage but continues to suffer drought, gang violence and economic strife.

Orlando Zepeda, 51, a father of two and member of the National TPS Alliance, a coalition established and led by TPS holders, said: "I have lived here almost twice as long as I ever lived in El Salvador. My home and family are here. The decision to end TPS for El Salvador and other countries was devastating. Today we join together to say that it was also illegal."

Many of the TPS-holders have resided in the US for 20 or more years, but will be forced to leave the country if the administration's new policy remains in effect. Tens of thousands of US citizen children will then be forced to either separate from their parents or leave the only country they have ever known.

The lawsuit is brought by nine people with TPS rights and five US citizen children of TPS holders. It will be filed in US district court in San Francisco by the ACLU Foundation of Southern California, the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON) and the law firm of Sidley Austin.

Ahilan Arulanantham, advocacy and legal director of the ACLU of Southern California, said: "These American children should not have to choose between their country and their family."

A draft complaint seen by the Guardian makes the argument that the "new rule violates the constitutional rights

of school-age United States citizen children of TPS holders, by presenting them with an impossible choice: they must either leave their country or live without their parents."

The complaint also contends that the administration's restrictive view of the TPS laws was unconstitutional as it was adopted to further the administration's anti-immigrant, white supremacist agenda. Earlier this year, during a negotiation over the fate of people who have TPS status, Trump allegedly referred to the affected nations as "shithole countries".

Emi MacLean, staff attorney for NDLON, said: "With the stroke of a pen, this administration upended the lives of hundreds of thousands of people lawfully residing in the United States for years and sometimes decades. But in terminating TPS in the way that it did, this administration was exercising authority it did not have."

The plaintiffs are members of organisations fighting to defend TPS including the National TPS Alliance, Carecen-Los Angeles, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), Unite-Here, and African Communities Together.

East Bay Eighth-grader Is Face Of Suit Filed Monday Against Trump Deportation Plans

By Bob Egelko

San Francisco Chronicle, March 13, 2018

A lawsuit filed in San Francisco on Monday challenged the Trump administration's plan to deport more than 200,000 people from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan in the U.S. after disasters in their homelands, arguing that the decision was motivated by racism and would coldheartedly tear parents from their children.

"With the stroke of a pen, this administration upended the lives of hundreds of thousands of people lawfully residing in the United States for years and sometimes decades," said Emi MacLean, a lawyer for the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, which filed the federal court suit with the American Civil Liberties Union and private attorneys.

As evidence of the administration's motives, the lawyers cited President Trump's vulgar insult to African nations and Haiti at the White House meeting in January and his evidence-free assertion in June 2017 that Haitian immigrants "all have AIDS."

They are contesting the administration's decision to revoke a program called Temporary Protected Status, established by a 1990 law that allowed people fleeing catastrophic conditions in their native countries to live and work in the U.S. under permits that have been renewed every 18 months.

The largest group, 195,000 people, are from El Salvador, whose residents were granted U.S. protection after a series of earthquakes in 2001. About 46,000 Haitians were granted protected status after a 2010 earthquake, 2,550

Nicaraguans were admitted after a 1999 hurricane, and 1,040 Sudanese gained protection after fleeing their country's civil war in 1997.

The lead plaintiff in the suit is 14-year-old Crista Ramos, who was born in Marin County and is an eighth-grader living in San Pablo. Her mother, Cristina Morales, 37, also a plaintiff, came to the U.S. in 1993 with her mother, who was fleeing domestic violence in El Salvador, and was granted protected status in 2001. Cristina Morales runs the extended care program at the school her daughter attends.

Overall, more than 400,000 people from 10 nations are living in the U.S. under Temporary Protected Status. The Trump administration's revocations have prompted other lawsuits, but this is the first to challenge the withdrawals for all four countries.

Past administrations of both parties have reapproved protections for nations on the list, citing new dangers and hardships in those countries. But the Trump administration reversed course last year when its Homeland Security secretaries — John Kelly, then Elaine Duke and now Kirstjen Nielsen — said the protections should be withdrawn, and the foreigners deported, once the original disaster and problems related to it had ended.

They declared that protected status for Sudan would end in November 2018, for Nicaragua in January 2019, for Haiti in July 2019 and for El Salvador in September 2019.

Such a "sudden and unexplained departure from decades of decision-making practices" violates U.S. law and the rights of the entrants who rely on it, the suit said.

It also argued that the action was an unconstitutional expression of "the Trump administration's repeatedly expressed racism toward non-white, non-European people from other countries."

Trump uttered his slur of Haiti and African nations while discussing the temporary-protection program with lawmakers, a week before his administration revoked protected status for Haitians, the suit said. It also cited the president's comparison of immigrants to snakes and his reported prediction that Nigerians would never "go back to their huts" if they were allowed to enter the United States.

In addition to violating the rights of adults whose protections would be rescinded, the suit said, revocation would also intrude on the rights of tens of thousands of children born in the U.S. who would have to choose between leaving for countries most of them have never seen or separating from their parents.

If the Trump administration is allowed to remove protected status for entrants from the four nations, the suit argued, the courts must at least continue protections for parents whose U.S. citizen children are school-aged, between 5 and 18.

The Department of Homeland Security declined to comment on the suit.

Bay Area Families 'Terrified' Of Returning To El Salvador After Government Ends Relief Program

By Laura Waxmann

San Francisco Examiner, March 12, 2018

Bay Area families and immigrant rights advocates rallied around the federal government's decision Monday to terminate a relief program that for almost two decades has allowed more than 200,000 immigrants from El Salvador to live and work in the U.S.

Along with the program's repeal, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced that Salvadoran Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries will have until Sept. 9, 2019 to either adjust their status if eligible, make plans to return to El Salvador, or face deportation.

"It's shocking news that we kind of expected, but now that it's official, it hurts," said Ramon Cardona, director of the East Bay-based Centro Latino Cuzcatlan, at a news conference held by the Bay Area Coalition to Save TPS in San Francisco hours after the repeal was announced.

Immigrants from Haiti and Nicaragua are also facing the end of their TPS designations, which the federal government repealed last year.

Granted to countries experiencing humanitarian crises, the U.S. designated El Salvador as a TPS recipient following a series of devastating earthquakes in 2001. Previously, Salvadoran TPS beneficiaries could work and reside in the U.S. legally, as long as they paid to renew their status and work permits every 18 months for some \$495 — but that will change in 2019.

According a statement from DHS, the federal government has determined that 17 years after earthquakes displaced thousands, the country no longer warrants the protected status.

But Cordona called this determination "a lie" and deemed the decision to send "tens of thousands of families" back to a country that continues to suffer from violence and poverty, the "premise of a humanitarian crisis" in El Salvador.

"There is no way that a poor country with high levels of unemployment and one of the highest levels of violence affecting any nation in Latin America, is going to be able to integrate in a normal fashion," he said.

The announcement came as a blow to many Salvadoran nationals like Yesenia Ruiz, a mother of three, for whom returning has not been an option for more than 20 years.

Ruiz said she worries most for her 18-year-old son, who was born in El Salvador but immigrated to San Francisco as a child and is not yet a U.S. citizen.

"For him it will be dangerous...to go back and be a youth susceptible to the violence in El Salvador," Ruiz said at Monday's news conference.

Supervisor Hillary Ronen, whose district includes much of The City's Latino population, said her office will continue to work to "put the resources into making sure there are lawyers in the community" to work with TPS recipients on identifying "permanent paths to staying in this country."

At the Mission District's Central American Resource Center (CARACEN), a designated attorney provides legal counsel to TPS beneficiaries from El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras daily.

Monica Oca Howell, a senior immigration attorney with CARACEN, agreed that it is "highly unsafe" for Salvadoran TPS beneficiaries "to return at this point."

"We work with a lot of clients who fled El Salvador fairly recently [due to] a lot of gang violence and extortion," Oca Howell said. "They are going to be facing a lot of challenges, aside from having to break their community ties that they have established here over the course of 15 years."

Regardless, 18 months from now, "nearly 200,000 TPS recipients and 192,000 U.S.-born children of theirs will have to make a very critical, horrible decision," Cardona said.

It's unclear exactly how many TPS beneficiaries reside in the Bay Area. According to Cardona, about one-third of the some 200,000 Salvadorans affected nationally live in California.

Some 1,400 TPS beneficiaries from El Salvador have received legal counsel at CARACEN since 2001, according to Oca Howell.

The organization advises those affected to seek legal counsel on alternatives to the temporary status immediately.

For instance, those who have been victims of violent crimes could qualify for U-Visas, while others who have U.S.-born children over the age of 21 could, in some cases, be eligible for permanent legal status.

"Unfortunately there may not be an alternative form of relief for everybody affected by this decision," she said.

Fleeing El Salvador's Civil War in the early 1990s, Freddy Ochoa relocated to San Francisco at the age of 18, but was denied political asylum.

"We were suffering to the point where I had to leave," said Ochoa, who now works in construction. "I do not see me or my family returning to my country. I'm terrified."

For more than half his life in the U.S., TPS had kept the father of two safe.

Now, Ochoa's only hope for continuing the life that he began building in San Francisco more than two decades ago would be a legislative solution.

"That would be [fair], if the government would give us a permanent status since we have been here for many years, paying for TPS," he said.

Red Tape Traps Teenagers Seeking Refuge In U.S.

By Caitlin Dickson

Yahoo! News, March 12, 2018

Like most teenagers in the United States, Luis looked forward to his 18th birthday. Unlike most teens, Luis's excitement was not about being able to vote or buy cigarettes or other American rites of passage associated with turning 18, but about the prospect of being released from custody and reunited with his family.

A little more than two months before his birthday, Luis, whose name has been changed to protect his identity because he is currently seeking asylum, arrived at the southern U.S. border after a long and dangerous journey through Mexico. His father had never been a part of his life, so when his mother fell ill and went to live in a church without him, Luis decided to leave his Guatemalan village, which had become ruled by violence, and seek work in Mexico. But not long after arriving in Chiapas, Luis met someone who told him that if he had family in the U.S., he should go there. Luis knew he had relatives in Atlanta and, though he had no idea how to get there, he set out on a journey to find them.

After turning himself in at the border, he was placed in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that is tasked with the care of unaccompanied immigrant children. He was put on a plane and taken to live in a shelter-like facility in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., where a caseworker began collecting the paperwork necessary to request Luis's reunification with his relatives in Atlanta.

With his 18th birthday looming, his caseworker told Luis they would have to get the documents submitted as quickly as possible, warning that if he wasn't released before his birthday he could be sent to an adult detention center. The prospect of this made Luis start to panic but, he said, his caseworker insisted that he needn't worry. "We have time," he recalled her telling him.

So they proceeded to gather the paperwork and submit a request to ORR for Luis to be released to live with his brother-in-law in Georgia. As far as Luis knew, there weren't any issues and, by the eve of his birthday, he says, the caseworker told him there was a plane ticket to Atlanta ready for him to leave that night. They were just waiting on a response from the government as to whether it was going to approve his case.

"I was happy because I was ready to leave," Luis recalled. "I got ready with all of my clothes, my backpack..." but as Luis and his caseworker made their way to the facility's exit, she revealed to him some devastating news: His case had been denied.

Terrified and confused, Luis racked his brain for what he had done to suddenly deserve being treated like a criminal.

"All I did was turn 18," he said.

Luis is part of a growing trend, observed in recent months by legal advocates and social service providers who work with ORR, of unaccompanied immigrant teens — most of them fleeing violence at home in Guatemala, Honduras or El Salvador — being handcuffed, shackled and thrown into adult ICE detention, literally before dawn on their 18th birthdays. Most were in the process of pursuing asylum or other legal forms of refuge in the U.S.

Those directly affected by these changes constitute a relatively small but highly vulnerable population of young people known, in the parlance of the U.S. government, as Unaccompanied Alien Children, or UACs.

These are, generally speaking, foreign-born girls and boys under the age of 18 who have been caught — or, in many cases, turned themselves over to Customs and Border Protection — after entering the country illegally without a parent or guardian; hence the label “unaccompanied.” They are the victims of the Trump administration’s crackdown on undocumented immigrants generally, and in particular its focus on the violent MS-13 gang, which recruits teenagers from Central America.

The overwhelming majority of UACs who have arrived since 2014 have come from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, countries racked by poverty, corruption and brutal gang violence. Their journeys to the U.S. through Mexico often involve exploitation or abuse at the hands of traffickers.

The UACs might qualify for asylum in the U.S., but their status is complicated by the fact that they crossed the border illegally. Federal statutes and court rulings have established legal guidelines for how to treat this population of young people who’ve entered the country illegally but express fears of returning home.

A 1997 federal court decision known as the Flores Agreement required the government to release such children “without unnecessary delay” and make “prompt and continuous efforts” to reunify them with family in the U.S. while they make their legal case to stay.

Back then, the care of immigrant children was the responsibility of the Immigration Naturalization Service (INS). But in the aftermath of 9/11, the INS was dismantled, and most immigration and enforcement agencies were reshuffled into the newly established Department of Homeland Security. Not included under this broad new DHS umbrella, however, were the so-called UACs. With the passage of the Homeland Security Act in 2002, Congress incorporated the principles of the Flores Agreement and determined that custody should fall under the purview of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Congress’ concern for the welfare of these children was further codified by the 2008 passage of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPR), which granted immigrant kids the right to legal protections while in ORR custody, and mandated that the

agency ensure that children in its care are “promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child.”

But the priorities that shaped the treatment of immigrant children over the past two decades have been subordinated to the Trump administration’s hard-line approach to immigration. In speeches, President Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions have singled out minors from Central America as threats who take advantage of “loopholes” in immigration laws to infiltrate the U.S. and commit crimes.

Approximately 150,000 Central American teens and children have been caught crossing the border and referred to ORR since 2014.

The Department of Justice estimates that there are currently 10,000 active MS-13 members across 40 U.S. states, a figure that has remained relatively stable since at least 2006, with the highest concentrations in New York, Virginia and the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. (Though the gang now has a much larger presence in Central America, it was actually established in Los Angeles in the 1980s by teens whose parents had fled a deadly civil war in El Salvador.)

Police in New York’s Suffolk County have attributed 27 murders to MS-13 members since 2013; the parents of two teenage victims from the heavily Hispanic town of Brentwood, on Long Island, were saluted by President Trump in January’s State of the Union. A recent report by the Washington Post suggests that the surge in unaccompanied minors from Central America has helped fuel recent violence by MS-13, as members target these vulnerable recent arrivals for recruitment.

But even ORR, in its own memo to the White House Domestic Policy Council, admitted that “the great majority of UAC in ORR custody do not pose a safety risk to the public and are not affiliated with gangs. Many UAC come to the United States to escape violence and gangs in their home communities.”

The same memo refers to a June 9, 2017, ORR review of the teenagers in its “secure” and “staff secure” facilities — the small number who have been determined to pose a potential risk to the community, or to themselves, or of fleeing custody. “From that review, ORR determined that of the 138 UAC in those facilities on June 9, 35 were voluntarily involved with gangs. Four additional UAC had reported that they had been forced into gang participation. In the context of the nearly 2,400 UAC in ORR custody on that date, this means that gang members were approximately 1.6% of all UAC in care.”

Nevertheless, a number of procedural changes at ORR, together with ICE’s enforcement policies, are creating what critics call an inescapable cycle of prolonged detention.

As an ORR spokesperson noted in a statement to Yahoo News, unaccompanied youths technically fall under

DHS jurisdiction as soon as they turn 18. Still, legal advocates and social service providers who work with ORR say that in prior years ICE exercised discretion in how to treat them and would often sign off on alternatives proposed by lawyers or caseworkers in anticipation of their milestone birthday.

Under those agreements, 18-year-olds who were not deemed dangerous or a flight risk could be released on their own recognizance, or to family members, or placed in some kind of group housing, either with an ankle bracelet or with orders to check in at an ICE office regularly until their case has been resolved in court. A source in DHS who did not want to be identified confirmed that this had been the policy under previous administrations.

These so-called post-18 plans are still being prepared and proposed for clients who are on track to age out of ORR care, but advocates for the children say ICE is no longer considering them as an option.

The DHS source did not know how many teens have been taken directly into adult detention upon turning 18 under the current administration, nor could the source point to a specific policy change with regard to how ICE handles such cases. A February 2017 memo issued by then-Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly eliminated ICE's prior list of enforcement priorities established by Kelly's predecessor, Jeh Johnson, encouraging ICE agents to focus enforcement resources on certain categories of undocumented immigrants, including convicted violent criminals and recent border crossers.

By eliminating these priorities, Kelly implemented a new era of indiscriminate immigration enforcement, pursuing anyone and everyone who is in the country illegally, regardless of circumstance.

"I think Kelly and Trump were just in such a hurry to arrest everyone that they maybe didn't think of the implications on these kids," said the DHS source.

A class action lawsuit filed last week by the National Immigrant Justice Center accuses ICE of automatically transferring 18-year-olds from ORR to ICE custody without considering potential alternatives to detention. The suit argues that by failing to consider the least restrictive option available in the best interest of the child, ICE was violating a 2013 amendment to the TVPRA that extended such requirements to kids who turn 18 while in ORR custody.

Meanwhile, advocates suspect ORR is slowing the process of releasing children into the "least restrictive" situation, as required by law, so that more of them are aging out into ICE custody.

The ORR declined to provide Yahoo News with recent data on the number of immigrant teens in its custody who've been transferred immediately to adult ICE detention upon turning 18. It did, however, reveal the portion of unaccompanied children who've "aged out" of ORR custody

in general, which, although small, demonstrates a clear upward trend from 1 percent in 2014 to 2.4 percent in 2017, increasing incrementally each year.

At the same time, according to data published on the agency's website, the number of unaccompanied minors in ORR custody who've been reunified with a sponsor has decreased significantly across almost every state since October 2016.

One possible explanation is that family members, who may be undocumented themselves, are reluctant to come to the attention of DHS by volunteering as sponsors.

Arguably, though, the biggest effects on the reunification process stem from a series of policy and procedural changes implemented at ORR under the banner of what Director Scott Lloyd dubbed the agency's new Community Safety Initiative. According to an August 2017 memo to the White House Domestic Policy Council, the initiative was created in response to "public and congressional concerns about the Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, Central American street gang in American communities, and the involvement in that gang of some individuals who were previously in the ORR UAC Program."

Among the changes imposed under the Community Safety Initiative was a new requirement that either Lloyd or his deputy director, Jonathan White, personally review and approve all requests for release of any UAC who, at any point during their time in ORR custody, had been housed in secure or staff-secure facilities.

At any one time, that is a small fraction of the total number of UACs in ORR custody; the great majority are in "shelter-level" residences. But the New York Civil Liberties Union filed a class action lawsuit last month against Lloyd and others claiming that, under Lloyd's leadership, "the process of reunifying the children in the plaintiff class"—that is, those who have at any point been placed in a secure or staff-secure facility, even if their stay there was ultimately deemed unnecessary and they were moved back to a less secure facility — "has ground to a virtual halt, trapping these children in highly restrictive government-controlled facilities." (PDF)

The suit focuses specifically on New York, but the same trends have been observed by legal and social service providers that work with ORR around the country.

Nithya Nathan-Pineau is an attorney and senior program director for the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition's Detained Immigrant Children's Program, which provides legal services to children in ORR custody in the Washington, D.C. area. Because two of the three facilities in the country that provide secure detention for kids in ORR custody are located in the D.C. area (the third is in Northern California), Nathan-Pineau and her colleagues are well suited to observe trends within that population. Before the NYCLU

filed its lawsuit, she described similar scenarios of stalled cases and seemingly interminable detention.

"We have kids who've been trying for over a year to reunify with biological parents, and they're sitting in secure detention," she told Yahoo News. "I'm seeing more kids moving up to that higher level of security and not moving, and essentially getting stuck in secure or staff-secure. They may move between those levels, but we're not seeing kids really get released to sponsors."

In fact, she added, "we haven't seen a reunification out of secure detention in over a year."

Increasingly, allegations of gang affiliation — often based on information children disclose upon entering ORR custody, such as having been forcibly recruited or victimized by gangs either at home or along their journey to the U.S. — are leading to more secure and staff-secure placements, albeit often temporarily.

To bolster its new gang focus, the Community Safety Initiative calls for working with law enforcement to train residential facility staff and ORR-contracted social service providers who work with teens before and after release on how to identify gang affiliations, including cues such as clothing.

Someone who attended one of these training sessions and spoke to Yahoo News on condition of anonymity said the guidelines "felt a little bit more like profiling." The potential for mistakes was, this person said, "deeply troubling," because a misidentification could keep a teenager locked up for years.

As part of the intake process at ORR facilities, children have traditionally been encouraged to share all the details of their journey in order that those who may have been victims of trafficking or have otherwise fled particularly dangerous situations may be identified. Now, this person said, that information is being used against them, as staff are labeling kids as gang-affiliated at the mere mention of a gang, no matter the context.

"They may have been a victim of trafficking or may have known somebody who was in a gang," but now "a staff member who attends one of these trainings where you have very limited information being presented by DHS, they can then designate that child as gang-affiliated and they go straight to secure. That was never a policy before."

Such placements are subject to review, but "once they've gone to secure they cannot be released without their case being approved by [ORR] headquarters," the source said, where their requests for release are languishing, unanswered.

"That is really devastating because kids who pose no threat and may have been the victims of horrific trafficking for years are now having their cases held up, and they're not able to reunify in a safe environment because of these policy changes."

Even detainees who aren't flagged for secure facilities are spending more time in custody than before, says Nathan-Pineau, noting that ORR's average stay in shelter-level custody was previously around 30 days. According to statistics posted to the ORR website, the average length of stay in shelter and transitional foster care during fiscal year 2017 was 41 days.

Robert Carey, who served as ORR director under President Barack Obama from April 2015 to January 2017, questioned whether the ORR's new policies signaled a shift in the agency's role toward more of a focus on law enforcement.

"My question is, does that really belong in child service agency?" he asked.

Carey also expressed concern about the trend toward transferring unaccompanied teens from ORR custody to adult detention as soon as they turn 18.

"Many of these children have been victims of violence and sexual exploitation, so to put them in an adult detention facility is an end to be avoided, not pursued, and not to be done lightly," he said.

"Those policies are, to me, extremely politicized," said Diane Eikenberry, associate director of policy with the National Immigrant Justice Center. "It's not about the best interest of the kid. It's a messaging tool for the political appointees to say to the White House, 'We've got your back.'"

Eikenberry argued that prolonged detention — whether by ORR or ICE — undercut the "decades of recognition that it is inhumane to throw children in jail."

So far, the clearest result prolonged detention appears to be having is deterring those who've already made the dangerous journey here from continuing to pursue legal claims of asylum.

"It's really discouraging to see that because we believe that people have the right to seek asylum," said Nathan-Pineau. "It's not illegal to come to the United States to seek asylum. It's never been illegal, and it shouldn't be considered to be illegal now."

Before he was taken into ICE custody, Luis said, his caseworker told him he'd have two options: "You can pay a lawyer and fight your case, or you can sign an order of deportation and go back to your country."

"I was scared," he told Yahoo News. "I didn't want to go back to Guatemala, but I didn't want to go to jail."

Luis chose to fight his case and was taken to New Jersey's Bergen County jail, which is contracted by ICE to house immigrant detainees. He was given an orange shirt and matching pants with the word "Prisoner" printed in big, black letters down one of the legs, and locked in a cell with an older man from Africa who Luis said initially shared his food with him and then angrily accused him of stealing it.

"The days inside passed very slowly," Luis recalled. "There's nothing to do; they don't let you out, and the truth is,

I didn't know if it was night or day because you're just totally enclosed."

For the first few weeks, he didn't have any communication with the outside world — including his family. He was allowed to make one free phone call when he first arrived, but when he called his relatives in Atlanta no one answered. He had no money for additional calls, so no one knew where he was. About two weeks in, Luis says he was given the option to work in the kitchen, and about a week later he was paid.

After more than two months behind bars, Luis was finally taken from the jail — clad in his orange prisoner clothes, his wrists cuffed and shackled to a chain around his waist — to a courthouse in Manhattan for his first appearance in front of an immigration judge. He met with Alex Lampert, an attorney with Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS), part of a state-funded network of legal aid groups in New York that offer free representation in immigration court. The program, known as the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, or NYIFUP, was the first of its kind in the country.

Though a number of cities have similar local initiatives, New York has the only statewide program. So for unaccompanied teens in most other parts of the country, being transferred to adult ICE detention also means losing access to the legal services previously provided to them as minors in ORR custody.

With Lampert's help, Luis was released on bond after three months of detention and is now currently living with a pastor in the Bronx. He has successfully petitioned for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, a legal classification available to certain undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who've been abused, neglected or abandoned by one or both parents and for whom returning to their home country is not in their best interest. SIJS status will enable Luis eventually to petition the government for a green card.

In the meantime, Lampert added, he also has an asylum application pending.

Between his time ORR and ICE, Luis was in custody for approximately five months after he arrived in the United States. Still, he is lucky to now be pursuing these legal avenues for relief from outside the confines of detention.

"The detention itself is very coercive, by design or at least, by effect," said Lampert, noting that, for many teens, as well as adults, the barriers imposed by being locked up make even cases that could easily be won outside detention almost impossible to pursue from behind bars.

On a recent Thursday last month, a teenage girl from Guatemala was shuffled into one of the immigration courtrooms in Manhattan for her first appearance before a judge since entering the United States seven months earlier. Her entire time in the country had been spent in custody, first by ORR for four months, followed by another three months in ICE detention. Her brown, layered hair fell slightly in front of

wide eyes that darted around the courtroom as she waited for her turn to approach the bench. When her name was finally called, she stood no more than 5 feet tall and could barely raise her right hand from the shackle affixed to her waist.

Her lawyer, another attorney with BDS who declined to provide more details about the girl's case, told the judge that her client wanted out of detention, and would accept an order of removal back to Guatemala. The judge asked both the attorney and the girl a series of questions that ended when, with the help of a Spanish interpreter, the girl told the judge definitively, "I just want the deportation order."

And with that, in under 10 minutes, her prolonged detention in the United States was effectively over and she would soon be sent back to the country she'd fled seven months before.

Editor's Note: This story initially cited data inaccurately claiming that "In October 2016, CBP referred 66,708 unaccompanied minors to ORR care — which is close to the number of kids referred to ORR during the height of the 2014 surge. Those numbers dipped dramatically during the first few months of 2017, reaching a low of 15,766 in April of that year, but have steadily started to climb back up to rates comparable with previous years, ranging between 34,000 and just over 40,000 each month since October." Those numbers, since removed, reflected the total number of undocumented people apprehended at the Southwest border during that time period.

Sharp Drop In International Student Visas Worries Some US Colleges

By Parija Kavilanz

CNN Money, March 12, 2018

The number of F-1 visas issued to foreign students seeking to attend college and other types of academic institutions in the United States decreased by 17% in the year that ended September 30, 2017, according to recent State Department data.

"The current administration's 'America First' mantra is causing [international students] a great deal of anxiety and fear," said Earl Johnson, vice president of enrollment and student services at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma. "Also, the cost of college tuition, on average, has gone up 40% in the last 10 years. It's weighing on them."

That's bad news for schools that have large international student populations. Nearly 20% of the University of Tulsa's 4,400 enrolled students hail from overseas.

Johnson said his school has experienced declines in international enrollment for a few years now and it is starting to hurt revenue. The university has even placed a school official in China to recruit more students from overseas. At the

University of Tulsa, international students make up 20% of the student population.

F-1 visa approvals were trending higher for nearly a decade when they peaked at more than 600,000 in 2015. But they have dropped off dramatically since.

The United States issued a total of 393,573 F-1 visas in fiscal 2017, down from 471,728 in 2016. The government did not release the total number of F-1 visa applications it receives in a given year or how many applications were rejected.

The biggest decline in visa approvals in 2017 was seen among students from Asian countries, particularly those from China and India which typically account for the largest number of F-1 visas.

A number of factors could be driving the declines, said Allan Goodman, president of the nonprofit Institute of International Education.

While students are evaluating the cost of studying in the US versus somewhere else, they are also tuning in to the political rhetoric on immigration. "Inevitably, it does lead them to ask, 'Will I be welcome here?'" said Goodman. University of Tulsa is hoping to boost applications from international students.

But there are other factors that are also playing a role, he said. In China specifically, a 2014 change in visa policy allows Chinese students to obtain an F-1 visa for a five-year period instead of one, freeing them from having to renew their visa each year. That change alone could contribute to the recent declines, said Goodman.

Worldwide competition for international students is also heating up, he said. The United States used to account for almost half of all international students worldwide. Now about 24% of all international students come here, said Goodman.

Instead, they are going to countries like Canada, Germany and Australia, which are making it easier for international students to stay in the country after they graduate and become part of the workforce.

Meanwhile in the United States, the government's tougher stance on its popular H-1B foreign work visa, a common visa pathway for high-skilled foreign workers, is making it harder for new graduates to remain in the country and could be deterring overseas students from applying to American colleges.

"Having international students benefits the United States in many areas, in science and technology, even the number of Noble laureates we produce," said Goodman.

And international students add diversity to the classroom, he added. "Most Americans don't study abroad. At the very least, they get a sense of the outside world from the eight to 10 different nationalities in their classroom," he said.

"It's a fairly uncertain time for all higher education institutions in the US," Johnson said. "Right now we feel the

glass is half full. We are seeing a greater number of started applications from students overseas, but we have to wait and see how many complete their applications for the fall."

Spouses Of H-1B Holders Fighting To Keep Work Permits After Trump Administration Threatens Policy Change

By Kate Morrissey

Eugene (OR) Register-Guard, March 12, 2018

SAN DIEGO — Spouses of foreign workers are taking a stand against the Trump administration's plans to take away their work permits.

H-1B workers' spouses come on H-4 visas. Those are dependent visas, meaning the spouses are not allowed to have jobs in the U.S. Because many get stuck for over a decade on these temporary visas while they wait for the H-1B holders to become permanent residents, the Obama administration allowed H-4 visa holders who are waiting in long lines for green cards to work while they wait.

The Trump administration, citing the president's "Buy American, Hire American" agenda, announced in the fall of 2017 that it was planning to revoke that permission.

"We're a group of people who want to save our jobs," said Jansi Kumar, who helps organize a group of H-4 work permit holders called Save H4EAD. "It's a little crazy when you wake up one morning and you don't know whether you'll be allowed to work or not."

Because of annual caps on how many visas can go to citizens of one country, people from places like India and China, where many immigrant workers come from, have especially long waits for green cards.

If an employer decides to sponsor a green card for an H-1B employee from India, it can take well over a decade. The people at the front of the line from India for one class of employment visa have been waiting since December 2008, according to the State Department. For another class of visa, they've been waiting since December 2006.

In 2015, the Obama administration put in place a rule that allows spouses of H-1B visa holders to get a work permit after the H-1B visa holder has been accepted into the waiting line for a green card.

The issue mostly affects women, Kumar said.

The government agency that issues visas has approved close to 105,000 work permits for H-4 visa holders since 2015, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. That's just under 3 percent of the close to 4 million work permits issued by the agency in the same time frame.

Kumar's group did a survey of its members and found that 96 percent have at least a bachelor's degree, and 59 percent have more advanced degrees.

Many of the women who come to the U.S. on H-4 visas pursue additional degrees while they're not allowed to work, she said.

Priyanka Ursal, who came to San Diego in 2010 to live with her husband, said after one year of not working, she ended up applying for a master's program in information system management to have something to do.

"Before that, I had never sat home doing nothing a single day," Ursal said. "It was a hard thing to digest."

Originally from Pune, a city near Mumbai in India, Ursal grew up watching her mother work full time while raising her family. Ursal had similar expectations for herself before an arranged marriage, which are common in India, brought her to the U.S.

She said that first year in San Diego was painful because she couldn't work.

"There was some guilt in my mind. Am I wasting my time?" she recalled. "I have got a very nice education from a very good school, and I wanted to pursue my career."

After she finished her master's degree, she found a company willing to sponsor her for an H-1B visa.

Her first day back at work was the best day of her life, she said.

"I was so happy, like I could scream to everyone that I am back to life," Ursal said.

When her son was born, she decided to spend some time at home and relinquished her work visa.

At that point, the Obama administration had created the work permit for H-4 visa holders. Since her husband had been in line for a green card since 2011, she knew she'd be able to return to work when she was ready.

She found a job working as a senior test engineer at a startup. She and her husband are saving to buy a house.

She wants to set an example for her son as a working mother, and the job helps her pay for his day care.

"This job does not just mean money for me, but it is also my identity, my pride and my self-esteem," Ursal said.

She hasn't talked to her co-workers about her situation because she's waiting to see the Trump administration's final rule.

The proposed rule was supposed to be published to the federal register in February. The administration recently announced that it will now wait until June.

Sangeeta Degalmadikar, who came to the U.S. with her husband in 2008, has her own fashion design company that she started last year.

She's worried about what will happen to her business, and to her employee, if she loses her work permit.

"It was my dream to have my business and to achieve something," Degalmadikar said. "In India, I was a professional. After coming here, everything for me was blank."

She had plans to expand to an online store and possibly a storefront, but she's decided to hold off. She encouraged her employee to drop to part time with her and find other work to protect the employee from unemployment if Degalmadikar no longer has a way to run the business legally.

Sheetal Bangalore Srikumar, who lives in Poway, said that the uncertainty she's facing while waiting for the administration's decision has made it difficult to plan her family's future.

An engineer, she came to the U.S. in 2008 first on a student visa for a master's degree and then found a company to sponsor an H-1B visa for her.

Her husband was working in San Diego when they married. They couldn't find two H-1B sponsored jobs in the same city, so their lives involved many long commutes and a lot of time in separate cities.

In 2013, they got in the waiting line for green cards. When the Obama administration introduced the H-4 work permit, Bangalore Srikumar quit her H-1B job and moved to San Diego to be with her husband.

"In this century, canceling the whole work authorization for women it doesn't make any sense," she said. "It goes back to the olden days when women were not allowed to work."

She emphasized that H-4 workers pay taxes and want to contribute economically.

"We want to work," Bangalore Srikumar said. "After studying, after doing everything, you don't want to sit at home."

Expert: DACA Future More Uncertain Than Ever

By Alexandra Oliveira And Alison Spann

The Hill, March 12, 2018

Immigrants benefitting from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program face an uncertain future given the likely end of the program, according to Theresa Cardinal Brown of the Bipartisan Policy Center.

While courts have left in place the program allowing immigrants who came to the United States as children to stay here, the Trump administration is seeking to end it, and there is little, if any, chance for congressional action soon.

"Nobody's breathing a sigh of relief," Brown told The Hill.

"They know — even if they still have status right now, they know it could end and they know it could end at any time. They know the only permanent lasting solution for them is if Congress passes a law and the president signs it.

"It's actually more uncertain now because we don't know when it's going to end, but it probably will," she added.

Congress spent most of February trying to come up with a fix for the DACA program before a March 5 deadline that President Trump imposed last year.

So far, efforts to move forward with various solutions have failed to win 60 votes in the Senate.

In the House, Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) has co-sponsored a bill backed by many conservatives, but that legislation is opposed by Democrats and does not have enough support to pass the chamber.

"These are not immigration bills," Rep. Luis Gutiérrez told The Hill. "These are anti-immigrant bills, and I'm not gonna support anti-immigrant bills."

Immigration Angst Could Put Job Licensing Fix In Peril For Dreamers

By Mykal McEldowney

Indianapolis Star, March 12, 2018

A combustible mix of issues in the Indiana Senate is threatening to stall an effort to allow DACA recipients — often referred to as Dreamers — to get or keep professional licenses in occupations ranging from dentistry to hair styling.

Some Republicans in the GOP-dominated Senate fear the measure could have broader implications, opening the door not only to professional licenses, but also welfare and other forms of state aid for the young immigrants who were brought here illegally as children, but are protected from deportation and have been granted legal work status under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program.

"The attorneys have come in and said this would open up to all sorts of benefits well beyond just licensing," Senate President Pro Tempore David Long said Thursday.

The making of a monster: How Larry Nassar abused hundreds of gymnasts and eluded justice for decades

Civil disobedience: DACA expiration prompts protests and arrests in Indianapolis

As a result, there is almost universal agreement that narrower language is needed — but so far, the Senate has not taken the steps needed to change the language. And with only three days left until the end of this year's legislative session, time is running out.

A number of factors are complicating the issue, including uncertainty about the fate of the DACA program at the federal level and election-year fears among rank-and-file Republican senators that they might be viewed as soft on immigration.

Some of the hangups, though, have more to do with the internal workings of the Senate Republican caucus.

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One problem is that the bill's sponsors, Sens. Blake Doriot and Eric Koch, never signed up to carry a bill involving immigration issues.

Senate Bill 419 originally had nothing to do with licensing for DACA recipients. It would have simply prevented local governments from enacting professional licensing standards if the state already licenses that occupation.

Only when bill moved on to the House was it amended to address revelations, first reported in IndyStar, that the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency had added questions to its application forms and was using them to screen out DACA recipients.

So far at least 37 DACA recipients have been unable to obtain a professional license because of the new practice.

DACA advocates say the move unfairly prevents young immigrants who are legally allowed to work in the United States from getting jobs in more than 70 professional fields, including architecture, plumbing and nursing. About one in seven Hoosier workers have a license through the agency.

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Gov. Eric Holcomb has defended the change to the license applications as necessary to comply with a 2011 state immigration law, but he has also said he supports the proposed legislative fix.

Now, Doriot and Koch suddenly find themselves at the center of that controversy.

As the lead author, Doriot, R-Syracuse, has the right to concur with the House version or file a dissent, sending the bill to conference committee where a small panel of House and Senate members would hash out a final version.

But so far, Doriot, who initially expressed support for allowing DACA recipients to get state licenses, has not filed a dissent, thus preventing lawmakers from adding the more narrowly tailored language that will likely be needed to gain broad support.

He declined through a spokesman to be interviewed for this story, but said Senate attorneys are working on the issue.

Koch, meanwhile, is unlikely to support the bill given his hardline stances on immigration in the past. In fact, the Bedford Republican was the lead sponsor of the state's 2011 immigration law as a member of the House.

"I just can't comment on it right now because I don't know what its going to look like at the end," he said Friday.

Among other things, the 2011 law requires state agencies to verify that a person is a U.S. citizen or a qualified alien in order to receive state benefits, including professional licenses. Participants in the DACA program, which did not exist at the time, are not considered qualified aliens.

Additionally, several Senate Republicans, including Sens. Rodrick Bray and Travis Holdman, are jockeying to replace Long as the chamber's leader when he retires in November.

For some members, how those contenders vote on the DACA issue could be a kind of litmus test.

"What we may be seeing is a small number of Republican senators who will use this as away to decide who they might support in the leadership battle," said Andy Downs, a political scientist at the Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. "That is a caucus that is fighting about how far to the right it wants to go."

Angela Adams, an immigration attorney who has been advising lawmakers on the matter, took issue with allegations that language in the House version of the bill would allow DACA recipients to receive welfare benefits. Federal law prohibits that, she said, but it does give states permission to pass laws allowing DACA recipients to receive some benefits such as professional licenses.

If Indiana wants to allow professional licenses for DACA recipients and to comply with federal law, the legislature needs to pass a narrowly tailored law narrowly that explicitly allows immigrants legally authorized to live and work in the United States to seek professional licenses, she said

Long said he is confident that Senate Republicans and their lawyers can reach consensus before Wednesday's deadline.

"What we're trying to do is make sure that the licensing issue is met and handled in a way that allows the DACA kids to keep working in Indiana," he said. "We can get that done."

In the meantime, many of Indiana's roughly 9,000 DACA participants are anxiously waiting to see what lawmakers do.

"I'm going to have this degree I spent four years working towards while working multiple jobs," said Perla Alamillo, a 23-year-old University of Indianapolis nursing student who graduates in May.

A DACA recipient who attended public school in Shelbyville from kindergarten to high school, Alamillo already has a nursing job lined up at a local hospital where she has been working as a technician.

In an interview Friday, she wept as she considered the prospect of telling her employer that she won't be able to get her nursing license.

"It's just really hard to think about," she said, "when all I want to do is help people and make a difference."About DACA

How it started:

President Barack Obama established the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program in 2012.

What it does:

It protects immigrants brought to the United States illegally as children from deportation and grants them legal work status.

How it works:

DACA participants pay taxes and can obtain Indiana driver's licenses and social security numbers, but can't qualify

for many public benefits, including Indiana in-state college tuition rates and food stamps.

Who is affected:

There are nearly 700,000 DACA recipients nationwide, including about 9,000 in Indiana.

Uncertain future:

President Donald Trump had planned to end the DACA program March 5, but that move was blocked when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review a federal judge's order to continue the program. Democrats want the program left alone or made permanent through a new law; Republicans, with Trump's backing, have demanded other immigration enforcement and border security enhancements in exchange, including an expansion of the wall along the Mexican border.

Jeff Sessions To Rule On Asylum For Battered Woman

U.S. attorney general launches review of immigration-court precedent concerning domestic abuse victims

By Jess Bravin

Wall Street Journal, March 12, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump Administration Moves To Reshape Who Qualifies For Asylum : NPR

NPR, March 12, 2018

NOEL KING, HOST:

Here at home, the Trump administration is moving to limit who gets asylum in the U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is using his authority to reshape the law on who qualifies for asylum. Advocates for immigrants' rights warn that thousands of legitimate asylum-seekers could be turned away. NPR's Joel Rose has the story.

JOEL ROSE, BYLINE: There was no press release, no announcement from a podium. But behind the scenes, Attorney General Jeff Sessions has intervened in two cases that could have big implications for people who come to the U.S. and seek asylum. And the immigration lawyers who represent them are worried.

JEREMY MCKINNEY: They are amongst the most vulnerable people in our society.

ROSE: Jeremy McKinney is secretary of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

MCKINNEY: To have their rights curtailed so that the system moves faster, I think, should be considered a moral outrage.

ROSE: To Attorney General Jeff Sessions, the outrage is that immigrants are gumming up the system with false claims.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

JEFF SESSIONS: The system is being gamed. There's no doubt about it.

ROSE: That's Sessions giving a speech in October. Back then, he was asking Congress to tighten asylum rules. Last week, he acted on his own. In one case, he vacated a precedent-setting ruling that said most asylum-seekers must get a hearing in front of a judge before their claim could be rejected. In another, he is reviewing whether some crime victims should qualify for asylum. These moves come as no surprise to anyone who's followed his positions on immigration and asylum.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

SESSIONS: This system is currently subject to rampant abuse and fraud. And as this system becomes overloaded with fake claims, it cannot deal effectively with just claims.

ROSE: Immigration courts do face a huge backlog, upwards of 600,000 cases, more than triple the number in 2009. One factor driving that backlog is women and children streaming north from Central America. Many claim that they're eligible for asylum because they've been the victims of gangs or domestic violence in their home countries. Andrew Arthur is a former immigration judge. He's skeptical about this kind of claim.

ANDREW ARTHUR: It's actually become a – sort of a catchall for truly inventive lawyers.

ROSE: Immigration courts work differently than regular courts. They're part of the Justice Department, so the attorney general has the power to personally overturn decisions by immigration judges. The former judge, Andrew Arthur, is now a fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for lower levels of immigration. And he applauds the recent moves by Sessions.

ARTHUR: One, it's going to streamline the system. Two, it's going to cut down on the number of claims that are inevitably – or at the end of the day – going to be found to be invalid.

ROSE: Not every crime victim is eligible to claim asylum. The victim must have a well-founded fear of persecution based on certain factors like race or religion. The law around this has been fiercely litigated, says Jeremy McKinney, the immigration lawyer.

MCKINNEY: The fear is that this Justice Department will undo all of those gains that were made through decades of litigation.

ROSE: McKinney and others are worried in particular that Sessions will overturn a landmark decision from 2014 that made it easier for domestic violence survivors to get asylum, people like Aracely Martinez who fled to the U.S. from Honduras.

ARACELY MARTINEZ: (Speaking Spanish).

ROSE: Martinez was pregnant when the father of two of her children killed their kids and shot her in the head before killing himself. She moved to another part of Honduras, but

his family found her and threatened to kill her. Martinez got asylum withheld from the Tahirih Center for Justice, a nonprofit that supports immigrant women.

MARTINEZ: (Speaking Spanish).

ROSE: Martinez says she would like to see more women like her get help. She says she finally feels safe in this country. Joel Rose, NPR News.

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ICE Removal Key Goal Of Democrats In 2020 Election

By Alex Pappas

Fox News, March 12, 2018

The Democrats mulling a run for the White House in 2020 are facing intense pressure from liberals to campaign on abolishing the agency that enforces federal immigration laws, a proposal that was once relegated to the far-left fringe.

In protesting the Trump administration's policies toward illegal immigration, liberal commentators and writers have been embracing the idea of gutting the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, which identifies, arrests and deports illegal immigrants inside the United States.

"This is a growing position on the left, and I imagine 2020 Democratic presidential aspirants will have to grapple with it," liberal writer and MSNBC host Chris Hayes tweeted.

In January, the idea was endorsed by Brian Fallon, a former top aide to 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, and Eric Holder, President Barack Obama's attorney general. The Daily Caller first drew attention to the calls.

"ICE operates as an unaccountable deportation force," Fallon tweeted. "Dems running in 2020 should campaign on ending the agency in its current form."

Thomas Homan, the acting director of ICE, has reacted to these calls by Democrats by saying they should speak to victims of illegal immigrant crime.

"These politicians, they need to talk to the victims of alien crime, talk to the parents that I talk to that lost children at the hands of criminal aliens," Homan said Thursday on Fox News' "Tucker Carlson Tonight."

But the idea has picked up steam in recent days after Hayes, the MSNBC host, asked Democratic California Sen. Kamala Harris if she believes ICE should exist.

"ICE has a purpose, ICE has a role, ICE should exist," Harris, a potential 2020 candidate, responded. "But let's not abuse the power."

Since then, Harris, the former attorney general of California, has faced a backlash from liberal publications.

"Kamala Harris is very likely running for president in 2020," Jack Mirkinson of the liberal Splinter website wrote. "It should be a political problem for her that she is not willing to take her criticisms of ICE to their logical conclusion and call for its abolition."

He added: "She should be asked, over and over again, why exactly she is willing to uphold the legitimacy of such a racist, corrupt, and thuggish organization."

Mirkinson wrote that other potential candidates – like Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti – "should be asked the same question."

The Nation, a liberal magazine, last week also published an article titled "It's Time to Abolish ICE." The writer accused the agency of being part of an "unbridled white-supremacist surveillance state" and called it "an unaccountable strike force executing a campaign of ethnic cleansing."

"Though the party has moved left on core issues – from reproductive rights to single-payer health care – it's time for progressives to put forward a demand that deportation be taken not as the norm, but rather as a disturbing indicator of authoritarianism," McElwee wrote.

Democratic officeholders also have been openly rebelling against ICE, including Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, who recently tipped off the public to an immigration raid in the San Francisco Bay Area.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., last week slammed that raid as "unjust and cruel."

Attorney General Jeff Sessions, in a speech in California last week, said as many as 800 illegal immigrants may have evaded capture and said Schaff's tip-off put both residents and law enforcement at risk.

Sessions called California's "open borders" policies a "radical, irrational idea that cannot be accepted."

"It cannot be the policy of a great nation to reward those who unlawfully enter its country with legal status, Social Security, welfare, food stamps, and work permits and so forth," he said. "How can this be a sound policy?"

Alex Pappas is a politics reporter at FoxNews.com. Follow him on Twitter at @AlexPappas.

More Cubans Return To Cuba To Live

By Sarah Moreno

Miami Herald, March 12, 2018

For Rene, Miami has been a lonely place since his wife died eight years ago.

Although the 78-year-old from Guantánamo, Cuba, lives with his daughter and granddaughter, he's alone most of his time. So in July, he asked for Cuban government permission to return.

"The loneliness kills me," said Rene. "The end of the road for old people here is an institution because the family cannot take care of us," he said. "And that would be the worst that can happen to me."

Rene came to Miami in 2004 as a political refugee. He is now a U.S. citizen but wants to reunite with his two sons, four brothers and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren in Guantánamo.

"I don't regret coming here. If I say that, I would be ungrateful," said Rene, who spent five years as a political prisoner in Cuba. "But in Cuba, life is different. You move around and you talk to people. Here, you can spend a month and not see your neighbor."

Rene and most of the other Cubans interviewed by el Nuevo Herald for this story did not want to provide their real names for many reasons, including the fact that many are waiting for Cuba's approval for their return. They form part of a trend that has been growing since the migration reforms that Raúl Castro launched in 2013.

Under those reforms, Cubans who left and were called "emigrants" by the government can now apply for "repatriation" to regain residence and its benefits. They apply at the Cuban consulates in the countries where they live, or at the Interior Ministry on the island.

That does not mean they can recover any properties confiscated when they left Cuba. The government usually seized the homes of people who emigrated "definitively."

Cuban government figures showed 11,176 Cubans applied for repatriation in 2017, most of them living in the United States. In November 2016, the head of the Cuban diplomatic mission in Washington said that 13,000 had applied. A similar figure, 14,000, was used by Juan Carlos Alonso Fraga, head of the Center for Population and Development Studies at the National Statistics Office, during a TV appearance.

"They are of all ages, of both genders, although the majority are older than 50," Fraga said, adding that the trend of 2016 was continuing in 2017.

The Cubans interviewed by el Nuevo Herald gave very different reasons for their decision to return to the island.

Some, like Rene, want to spend their last years with family in their home country. Others need medical care, and still others want to buy or inherit a home, retire in a place where the cost of living is cheap or even engage in political activism.

For Iliana Hernandez, an activist in the opposition organization Somos+ who returned from Spain in 2016, "I did it because we have to educate Cubans to lose their fear, to use my attitude to show that we can demand our rights

through non-violent struggle," said Hernandez, who gave her real name.

Hernandez, who has Spanish citizenship, said she lives full time on the island but travels abroad "to breathe a little bit and live in democracy." Residing in Cuba, living somewhere else

In fact, most of the people who have or want to regain their residency say they don't plan to live on the island. The 2013 migration reforms also allowed Cubans to live abroad for up to 24 months without losing residency, its benefits or their properties.

"It's all a matter of money. A large majority is not repatriating because they want to live in Cuba, but because it allows them certain economic advantages," said Manuel, who started his application earlier this year but plans to continue living in Miami.

The advantages include cheaper passports. A Cuban living in the United States must pay \$400 to obtain a Cuban passport, but a resident pays only \$100. Renewals of the document, required every two years, cost \$200 for Cubans living abroad but only \$25 for residents.

Returning Cubans also have the right to bring in a shipment of household goods without paying import duties. Once there, they can also import goods for personal use and pay in Cuban pesos rather than hard currencies.

Manuel, 39, said he expects to benefit from the lower costs for passports, but added that his main reason for seeking Cuban residency is to keep the government from denying him the ability to reenter the island.

"I don't want to be like Ofelia Acevedo," he said, referring to the widow of activist Oswaldo Payá, who lives in Miami. She has been denied re-entry to Cuba while her daughter, Rosa María Payá, has been allowed to travel between Miami and Havana.

"When you emigrate, the government can deny you entry to the country. But when you're a resident you can enter as often as you want," he said. "In fact, you live in Cuba even though you live in Miami."

Cuba's requirements for regaining residence include having someone on the island who promises to house and feed returnees until they can provide for themselves.

Most of the returnees bring their own money, however, and in many cases plan to invest in a small business like a hair salon or a family restaurant.

"People take clothes and medicines from Miami and sell them there" to make ends meet, Manuel said.

He added that Cuban immigration officials usually ask the would-be returnees if they plan to invest in a business, what they plan to do on the island, why they are returning and what kind of jobs they have in the country where they live.

He said he told his interviewer that he wanted to care for his mother, but overheard another man who was applying say that he was "sorry he fell for the lies of imperialism, and

that living in the United States was not what he had expected."

"I chatted with that man and it was all a lie. He just wanted to enter Cuba and still live in West Palm Beach," he said. The right to buy and inherit property

Manuel said he believes the repatriation system is illegal and "can only have been conceived in the macabre mind of the Castros."

"How can I lose my rights as a Cuban just because I go to live somewhere else?" he asked. "No one understands why you need to repatriate yourself to your own country."

The word repatriation also angers Beatriz, a Miami woman who left Cuba 25 years ago but still regards the island as her motherland.

"I want to regain my rights as a Cuban citizen," said Beatriz, who started the process last year. "For example, the right to inherit my mother's house. Here, I have a good salary and a house that I am still paying for. But my family house is in Cuba, and we could lose it."

Being able to inherit and purchase property is among the rights recovered by Cubans who regain their residency.

"That's attractive, being able to buy a property," said Beatriz. She said she does not consider investing in Cuba to be risky, and that she lost no property when she left because she lived with her mother, who kept the house.

"It would be more risky to give money to another person to buy a property for me," she added. "You take a risk with anything you do. Right here in Miami, many of my friends lost their homes during the housing crisis."

Her short-term plan is to retire in Cuba. Health care

Cancer drove Armando to return to Cuba in December 2016. A year earlier, he was diagnosed with stage four stomach cancer. He underwent a risky surgery, complicated by an infection.

Now totally recovered, Armando said in an interview from New York that after eight surgeries and a round of chemotherapy, his wife abandoned him and took their son.

"I was left alone, without money, without being able to get out of bed or do anything," he said. He lost his job, his medical insurance and then his disability payments.

His mother in Cuba obtained a humanitarian permit from the Cuban government to take him to the island.

As a foreigner in Cuba, he initially had to pay in U.S. dollars for his treatment at the Ciro Garcia Clinic in Havana. So he decided to regain his residency and continued his treatment at the Oncology Hospital, also in Havana, paying in pesos.

He stayed on the island for four months and recovered, but never planned to stay.

"I begged God not to leave me there, that I did not belong in Cuba," Armando recalled. He said he could not get accustomed to all the shortages, especially of food, and the bad service.

"What we Cubans are doing is trying to recover the rights they took away from us. No other country takes away your rights if you leave," he said. "I believe it was a mistake to punish us like that."

For Manuel, the welcome he received from Cubans and the possibility of getting to know them was a plus.

He said Cubans joke that when someone left the country they would say, "Lola, traitor." But now they say, "Lola, bring dollars."

Manuel said he does not believe the return of Cubans will lead to immediate changes, but he does see it as an opportunity for Cubans on the island to learn about the lives of others who live abroad.

"This raises a question. Why did everyone abroad do better?" he said.

Cubans who return also regain the right to vote, he concluded, and may have a voice when political change is possible.

This is the first of a two-part report

In El Paso, Immigrant Youth Are Changing The Face Of Border Activism

By Gabriel A. Solis

Vice, March 12, 2018

On November 17, 2017, in the small city of Socorro, about a dozen students from the University of Texas at El Paso protested their local congressman. They carried colorful signs, a hand-painted banner that read "Education Not Deportation," and chanted that those lame enough not to be dancing with them were probably with the Border Patrol. The students' target was Will Hurd, a Republican who represents a third of the US-Mexico border. They berated him for not advocating on behalf of DREAMers—people brought to the country as children—as well as his ongoing support for deploying military technology on the border.

The modest protest was just one of many pointing to a larger trend of activism led by *fronterizxs* — young folks who have lived their entire lives on the border and are increasingly joining boisterous, immigrant-led youth movements. In fact, the loud and public demonstrations represent a watermark moment in the longer arc of the movement for immigrant justice. The Texas-based group *Soñando Juntos*, organized by *fronterizxs*, is building something special by ensuring their movement is intersectional, connecting the struggle for immigrant justice with queer liberation, racial justice, and a critique of American colonialism.

Soñando Juntos's biggest priority is organizing to demand a clean DREAM act: a permanent legal solution for the roughly 800,000 young people granted a temporary reprieve by Barack Obama in 2012 that doesn't include a border wall or new anti-immigrant policies. They've staged direct actions at congressional offices, led marches, and

organized *fronterizx* youth to travel to Washington, DC, to demand changes at the highest levels. Their strength is in getting undocumented youth to build alliances with each other, and in using the personal experiences of their members to inspire collective action.

A s co-leader of *Soñando Juntos*, Alonzo Mendoza, 28, put it off the situation under Trump, "Even though I'm not an immigrant, I'm a queer person of color, and my other identities are being attacked."

The youth are banding together to support each other's rights despite their varying legal status. "When we started organizing it felt like there was nothing in El Paso for immigrant youth. We basically started from zero," added Roberto Valadez, a 24-year-old college graduate. "We asked ourselves why immigrant youth in an 80 percent Latino community weren't organized here like they were in Chicago, LA, or New York. And we think that's because of border militarization."

Mexicans on the US side of the US-Mexico border have had to keep an eye open for the Border Patrol—known as *la migra*—since 1924. Yet in the past 30 years, there's been an unprecedented surge in border militarization. Since 1993, the Border Patrol's budget has increased tenfold, and the number of agents has doubled. Meanwhile, the border has become a dumping ground for a host of military technologies ranging from "Predator Drones" to heat detection sensors—much of which is repurposed equipment that had been used in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. And a string of checkpoints surrounding cities like El Paso and Las Cruces, New Mexico, keep even legal residents feeling watched and unsettled.

Valadez entered activism in the days following Donald Trump's election, a time of extreme insecurity for immigrants and border communities of all stripes. In El Paso, the local border patrol union had voted to back the national union's endorsement of the Republican race-baiter. Statewide, legislators pushed through SB4, a law which (if it isn't permanently struck down) would have fined local authorities who refused to comply with ICE and allowed cops to ask anyone about their legal status for any reason at any time.

Valadez and Mendoza quickly organized *Soñando Juntos*, or *Dreaming Together*, and began recruiting immigrant youth to join their ranks.

Born in Juárez, Mexico in 1993, Valadez came to El Paso when he was one. He grew up in the early years of intensive border policing, when agents poured into urban border communities during "Operation Hold the Line." His charisma is subtle. At first glance, he's a normal guy—average height, wears simple T-shirts, blue jeans, maybe a flannel here and there. But when you catch him on the political landscape, he's a different person. His fearlessness attracts people—especially other immigrant youth. He is wholly unafraid of sharing his status, and began doing so at a

time when elder organizers were urging him to keep certain details under the radar.

When President Obama initiated DACA, it paved the way for major changes in Valadez's life. The program enabled him to enroll in school, find legal employment and for the first time, feel confident enough to speak openly about his status and use it as a tool for social change.

Still, recruiting other immigrant activists was not an easy task, one that's become way harder under Trump. "The biggest barrier for us has been finding other undocumented youth that are willing to be vocal," Valadez said, "We already knew all the stories of abuse and all the disparities in the detention centers, but this newer climate is terrifying for people."

Roberto Valadez (left) and Noe Labrado (right) of Soñando Juntos speaking to demonstrators at a protest in El Paso, TX. Illustration by Zeke Peña.

According to Fernando Garcia, executive director of the Border Network for Human Rights, "People are afraid to buy groceries or take their kids to school, because if they are confronted by this apparatus the consequence is separation, detention, deportation."

Still, Soñando Juntos used Facebook and word of mouth to slowly build a network of committed foot soldiers in the fall of 2017. The group is part of the umbrella immigrant-lead organization United We Dream that has an estimated 400,000 members across the country. Their greatest weapon has been collaboration: Valadez helped found a coalition of student groups called Education Not Deportation, which launched a campus organizing campaign.

It was during this feverish time of organizing that he met Claudia Yoli. Yoli, 25, moved to El Paso from Venezuela when she was eight years old. Like Valadez, she grew up in a militarized border shaped by checkpoints and intensified border policing. "We had to be really careful about saying we were immigrants, but because of our accents, it was clear we were not from El Paso," she told me.

As Yoli came of age, she applied for a green card but was denied and had to turn down the chance to go to her dream college due to her ineligibility for federal financial aid, she recalled. In fact, by the time of her entry into the DACA program, Yoli was already in removal proceedings. She channeled these experiences into activism—working not just on immigration issues but also reproductive rights and voter education. When she joined Soñando Juntos, she was already a seasoned activist, ready to recruit others and share her story.

"Because we are a hyper militarized community, ours is a cultural type of work," she explained. "There has been so much stigma around being undocumented, so as young people stepping forward with our stories, we create change."

At marches, Valadez, Yoli, and Mendoza rally the troops in chants and carry their banner. When Valadez steps

in front of the microphone, he enthalls the audience with his honesty: "My name is Roberto Valadez, I am undocumented, and I am a DACA recipient."

Three years ago, it would have been hard to imagine activists making such proclamations publicly in El Paso. But by declaring their reality, Valadez and Yoli are working to destroy the stigma associated with legal status.

Soñando Juntos, along with the group Education Not Deportation, launched a petition for the University of Texas El Paso to designate itself as a Sanctuary University, pledge support for international students, and permanently eject Border Patrol from campus. The latter demand was an especially crucial one for organizers, who were troubled by the increasingly common migra bike patrols disrupting campus life. The students organized a successful walk-out that drew over 100 faculty and staff on November 9, 2017—a remarkable feat at a commuter school without much of an activist presence. For Mendoza, this was a seminal moment.

"After the walk-out, so many people wanted to speak at the rally," he said. It really showed that there's a lot of interest in social justice with the youth in El Paso and if we cultivate that culture here, it has potential to grow."

This youth movement is a non-violent one, settling on noisy, public protests designed to demand the attention of the general public, as well as to disrupt "business as usual." Such tactics have also been a mainstay of movements from Occupy Wall Street to Black Lives Matter, the latter using non-violent direct action to bring attention to police brutality and issues affecting African-American communities. Nonviolence has also long been a staple of Chicano organizing, but in recent memory, many immigration-related organizations took a more cautious approach to protest, opting instead for softer political demonstrations like vigils and press conferences or bringing constituents to city councils.

Despite the danger of arrest and the consequences that could have for some of their own, Soñando Juntos is all about performative, spontaneous, confrontational protest. They actively call out politicians who fail to deliver on promises and intentionally try to create a raucous atmosphere. Their chants are provocative—directly critiquing the system of deportations and consistently slamming groups like ICE and Border Patrol. This unabashed style has put new pressure on local politicians, school administrators, and the press to take them more seriously.

"Historically, a lot of organizations in El Paso have been advocating for immigrant rights, but Soñando Juntos was the first group that really brought young DREAMers and undocumented youth together in the community," Yoli said.

Valadez added, "We're are creating a culture where people are no longer afraid or ashamed of who they are."

'Sisters' Help Women Sex Trafficked From China Flee U.S. Massage Parlors

Reuters, March 12, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

A Case That Threatens The Most Fundamental Of American Values

By Sarah Sherman-Stokes

The Hill, March 12, 2018.

On Feb. 27, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in the long-fought case of *Alejandro Rodriguez*, holding that noncitizens do not have a statutory right to a bond hearing while in immigration detention. Put simply, in a splintered 5-3 decision, the court held in *Jennings v. Rodriguez* that the indefinite detention of noncitizens is authorized by statute. That, in fact, green card holders and refugees can be locked up in jumpsuits and held in cells, referred to by number rather than name, for months, or even years, without allowing a judge to review the necessity of such detention.

Make no mistake, the court's decision is a devastating blow to noncitizens facing deportation — a group that has grown, and continues to grow, exponentially during this administration.

The case began with Mr. Rodriguez, a longtime lawful permanent resident from Mexico, who was brought to the United States as a baby, and later faced deportation following a conviction for misdemeanor possession of a controlled substance. The U.S. government has broad discretion to detain noncitizens, and the immigration statute dictates that certain classes of noncitizens are subject to so-called "mandatory detention." As a result, despite his long residence in the United States and minor crime, Mr. Rodriguez was not entitled to a bond hearing during his more than three years in detention.

He later appealed his case to the Ninth Circuit, which held that immigrant detainees and asylum seekers can't be detained indefinitely, and are in fact entitled to a bond hearing every six months. It may come as a surprise that the Obama administration appealed that decision to the Supreme Court, but it should not. That the Trump administration has continued to fight the Ninth Circuit's decision is emblematic of the sometimes similar enforcement agenda shared by the two administrations; President Obama deported more noncitizens than any president in history, and immigration arrests under President Trump are up more than 70 percent in some parts of the country.

In the Rodriguez case, both administrations have argued that the court stepped on congressional toes, trying to impermissibly "make law" by reading into the statute a requirement that a bond hearing be held every six months.

In this case, the Supreme Court seemed to wrestle with both statutory and constitutional questions. Indeed, the immigration statute is a sometimes inscrutable labyrinth of cross-referenced statutory provisions. But here, said Justice Alito, writing for the majority, the statute was clear — and nothing in the statute provided a basis for imposing the requirement of bond hearings every six months. The majority did not reach the constitutional issue, despite a rehearing in October and subsequent request for supplemental briefing on that question, likely because Justice Kagan recused herself and the court was unable to cobble together a majority.

Whether or not the prolonged detention of noncitizens is constitutional remains an open question. Still, Justice Breyer, in an impassioned dissent, which he took the unusual step of reading from the bench, argued that "the majority's interpretation of the statute would likely render the statute unconstitutional." Justice Breyer and his fellow dissenters would have found that to read the statute as not requiring bail hearings would run afoul of the constitution.

The practical impact of the court's decision is startling. Today there are more than 38,000 people held in immigration detention across the United States. The months, and years, that they spend in immigration detention take them away from their families, communities and businesses. What's worse, the prospect of prolonged and indefinite detention leads many of these noncitizens, unable to withstand the physical and emotional toll of life behind bars, to give up meritorious claims for relief.

Indefinite detention without the opportunity to see a judge threatens the most fundamental of our American values. In 2001, the Supreme Court, in a decision written by Justice Breyer, held that freedom from prolonged immigration detention lies "at the heart" of the Due Process clause of the Constitution; that all persons, including immigrants, are protected from being deprived of their liberty without due process of law. But because the Supreme Court did not reach the constitutional question in its majority decision in *Jennings v. Rodriguez*, the case now returns to the Ninth Circuit. There, we will see just what is left of due process for detained noncitizens in this country.

Sarah Sherman-Stokes is associate director of the Immigrants' Rights and Human Trafficking Program at Boston University School of Law.

America's Immigrants Could Be A Source Of Strength For The Economy

By Robert Bixby

The Hill, March 12, 2018

A major argument used by proponents of last year's tax-cut legislation was that it would boost the economy. Regardless of how that turns out, partisans on both sides generally agreed that growing the economy over the long

term was an important goal. It is, therefore, odd that the debate over immigration reform has been so devoid of economic analysis.

Given the demographic headwinds facing the economy, the case for providing at least some undocumented workers with a pathway to citizenship, and for increasing legal immigration in general, is far more compelling than the case for large deficit-financed tax cuts.

Fundamentally, long-term economic growth depends upon an expanding workforce and making that workforce more productive. Higher economic growth would improve wages, bring in more federal revenues and help put the budget on a sustainable path.

Based on current trends, however, the outlook for growth is not encouraging.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that the economy will grow at an average annual rate of just 1.9 percent over the next 30 years (adjusted for inflation). That would be a significant drop from the 2.6 percent average rate over the past 30 years.

The CBO is not being pessimistic. Demographic changes justify these slower-growth projections.

Since 1950, the growth in potential GDP (the maximum possible production of the economy if all resources were fully utilized) has been, in roughly equal parts, because of a growing labor force and rising productivity.

Over the coming decades, CBO projects labor force growth will be just one-third of the recent historical average as baby boomers retire, and productivity growth will be slightly below its average since 1950. This means that achieving growth anywhere near past levels will require new policies that increase the size of the labor force and improve productivity.

Many studies have indicated that higher levels of immigration could help with both. While it is not a magic bullet, it would be a source of strength for the economy.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) concluded in a 2016 report: "Immigration is integral to the nation's economic growth. The inflow of labor supply has helped the United States avoid the problems facing other economies that have stagnated as a result of unfavorable demographics, particularly the effects of an aging workforce and reduced consumption by older residents."

A 2017 Bipartisan Policy Center report said: "Immigration provides working-age population growth that helps support growing ranks of retirees. Immigrants also add to economic growth through innovation and entrepreneurship, assisting with productivity increases that help offset labor-force declines."

Increasingly, leaders of business and labor organizations are converging on the basic idea that pro-immigration policies are good for growth, wages and employment.

According to the NAS, "There is little evidence that immigration significantly affects the overall employment levels of native-born workers," and "The impact on the wages of native-born workers overall is very small." Negative impacts on wages are mostly found for prior immigrants "who are often the closest substitutes for new immigrants."

None of this means that the current immigration system is optimal, or that we should set aside concerns about border security. Immigration reform could change admission criteria while increasing, not decreasing, the total number of new immigrants. Moreover, there is no inconsistency in strengthening border security while increasing the number of legal immigrants.

Indeed, the bipartisan immigration bill that passed the Senate with 68 votes in 2013 would have added about 10 million people to the workforce over 10 years while investing in tougher border-security measures and creating a merit-based track for admissions.

According to CBO, the bill would have expanded GDP by 3.3 percent within 10 years and reduced the budget deficit by about \$135 billion. In contrast, the Joint Committee on Taxation projected that last year's tax cuts would increase GDP by an average of 0.7 percent over the first 10 years and increase the deficit by \$1.1 trillion.

There is a hole in our economic future: a shortage of willing and able workers. Immigration is the most direct and effective method of filling that hole. Closing our minds, and our borders, to that remedy would ignore a key building block for what has always made America great.

Robert L. Bixby is the executive director of The Concord Coalition, a non-partisan advocate of federal fiscal responsibility.

Cuts To H-1B Visas For Skilled Immigrants Hurt U.S. Economy

By Noah Smith

[Bloomberg View](#), March 12, 2018

The battle over tariffs may indicate that President Donald Trump has moved on from the immigration issue. When Democrats stymied Trump's plans to curtail family-reunification immigration, the chances of major legislation dropped substantially. But that doesn't mean that Trump is having no effect on immigration. Through a combination of executive actions and rhetoric, the president is deterring exactly the kind of immigrants that the U.S. most critically needs to keep its economy running.

Since coming into office, Trump has been making life harder for skilled foreigners working in the U.S. Trump temporarily suspended premium processing of H-1B visas, one of the main visas skilled workers use to enter the country. The only possible reason for that move was to harass visa applicants. Trump's administration has also made it harder to